ハイスクールD×D
20
進路相談のベリアル
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# Faker

Italy, somewhere. The youth was visiting the vineyard of a particular farm in a remote area of Italy. While walking forwards, the youth — Holy Spear wielder Cao Cao, entered the view of an old man who was working on the farm. The old man's farm clothes and straw hat suited him very well, and he also had an impressive build. At first glance from afar, one would think that the old man had previously served in the military or had some kind of athletic training. However, this old man wasn't just any ordinary kind. Although the old man had detected Cao Cao's presence a while ago, he opened his mouth to speak without even looking in his direction.

"Holy relic, this is the first time I've encountered such an aura."

The old man wore a gentle smile on his wrinkled face.

"Buongiorno!!! Holy Spear wielder, welcome to this farm."

The old man wearing a hat greeted him — no, it should be the Vatican's Cardinal Priest Vasco Strada. Just the other day, he was a major person of the Church who led many of the rebellious Church warriors. Defeated in battle against the anti-terrorist group [DxD], he accepted the judgement of Heaven without any resistance. Having reported everything without a lie to Heaven, this old Cardinal was now held in this farm. There was even a strong barrier which had been erected around a radius of several kilometres of the farm. It would not be an easy nor simple task to escape; this was a so-called prison barrier. For God, and for the faith that he devoted most

of his life to; in his attempt to realise the feelings of the Church warriors, the former wielder of Durandal was stripped of his position, and confined within what could be called a rather relaxed prison. Indeed guilty, judging from the scale of the incident which he brought on, not only should he have been stripped of his position, it was also possible that he would have had to use his life as punishment for his crimes. —However, considering his past achievements, beliefs, and the pleas of many of the Church's warriors, he was eventually sent to this farm.

"This is the land where I originally grew up. Sometimes, I used to come here to plant trees…it looks like I'll have to earnestly work hard here in the future."

Strada said as he stroked the bark of a tree.

"This is the first time we've met, Your Eminence. I'm Indra's vanguard."

The wielder of the Holy Spear introduced himself and Strada then spoke while he used a towel to wipe the sweat off his face.

"I see, a Pagan God [121] wants to ask this old man something, isn't that right?"

The old Cardinal thought that Cao Cao's visit was because Indra had a message for him. But, Cao Cao shook his head.

"No, you don't seem to think that I can also come to visit solely on a personal basis."

Hearing Cao Cao's words, Strada laughed with fascination.

"…Hoho, this is truly quite unexpected. —Well then, after coming all the way to such a remote place, what did you want to ask me?"

Cao Cao, hearing Strada's question, opened his mouth to reply but was silent for a moment, before finally asking

"……Being a hero, what do you think of it, Your Eminence?"

Perhaps because it exceeded his initial expectations of a question, Strada was initially surprised, but then rubbed his chin as he thought.

“…Hmm, this really is a strange question, young man.”

Cao Cao looked down and continued

“…I was born as the inheritor of a certain hero’s blood. On top of that, I was chosen by the Holy Spear. I used to believe that…these so-called [Heroes] were at the zenith of humanity, being able to defeat powerful otherworldly existences, I so wished, so thought, and so lived.”

He raised his head to look up at the sky, and then said

“…But, I lost to a certain young reincarnated Devil. My way of life was completely taken away from me right in front of my eyes by him. …Perhaps he never considered it, but that defeat became my opportunity to review and change my way of life. … Your Eminence who is admired by people as a hero, I certainly want you to tell me what a hero is.”

For the one who not only inherited the blood of a hero, yet by chance also the Holy Spear, being born as a genius, this was the first time that he had encountered a ‘wall’. He naturally inherited his ancestor’s lineage when he was born, and by fate, he wielded the strongest spear which could even defeat a God. Originally, he was an existence incompatible with humans — hunting the occult [131], defeating the occult, punishing the occult, as a way of life, and pursuing strength as a reason to exist. —But in front of the Red Dragon and the White Dragon, even the spear which he held in his hand denied him.

You’re weak, you’re just a kid who obtained the power of the strongest spear, that was said.

Hearing Cao Cao’s question, Strada smiled.

“…Hehehe”

Towards the surprised Cao Cao, the old holy man said

“This is simply disrespectful. —But, you’re too young. You are simply too young. Although you look about twenty years old, compared to me, you’re no different from a little baby. Ever since you called

yourself a hero, you've been mistaken."

Strada asserted.

"—Those who determine heroes are the people without power. Because they do not possess power, they will yearn for power, and so they will seek heroes, and decide who heroes are. Wielder of the Holy Spear, are you playing the role of the people's Hero?"

"……Well"

Cao Cao was speechless. …He was not chosen by anyone. Simply because he was descended from one, he thought that it should be so. It should be so, which was why he took for granted the blood which flowed through his veins, and the spear which he possessed. Strada bent down and sat on a wooden box which was placed in the farm then continued

"Not pursued by the people, claiming to be a hero or something, that's nothing but a child's game of pretence. Precisely because of this, you're no match for the Sekiryuutei kid who courageously walks his own path."

The old man's words completely denied the existence of the Hero Faction itself. It was just as he said, and Cao Cao was unable to refute it.

…That's right, it was just as Strada said, him, that man, courageously faced me head on, and bravely defeated me. Whether it was as the Sekiryuutei, or as a Devil, for his own goals, for the people he protected, he courageously fought with everything he had.My existence had been denied, and I was even defeated by him —. …Looking at myself now, what would the people who once followed and admired me think?

Strada was silent for a while, then faced Cao Cao and said

"You're just a mere human. And just a young man at that. Your ancestors may have been heroes —in fact, your ancestors were but ordinary humans. Thus you are still a human. Don't these so-called heroes praise those who advance forward courageously?"

…The Sekiryuutei as well, the citizens of the Underworld began to respect him because he always charged straight towards the front. Did he ever think of becoming a hero from the beginning? Of course, the answer was — no.

The old Cardinal smiled as he said

“Although I was called a hero, even at this age I don’t consider myself to be a hero. —But as long as there are people who look up to me, I will continue to be called a hero. I am simply a human. I live like any other human, and I will die like any other human. That is enough. If people respected me as a hero, then that’s fine.”

For a moment, the old man’s figure and the Sekiryuutei seemed to overlap.

…I was afraid that he would say that.

The old man laughed

“Hehehe”

as he put on his hat and stood up.

“Ah, I’m old now, so I speak long-windedly…. Originally, you already had a vague idea of this answer.”

“…That might have been so. Ever since I lost to him, I—”

Without thinking about this concept of a ‘so-called hero’, he became an ordinary challenger.

“Your Eminence, am I able to defeat that man?”

The youth who used to pretend being a hero then asked. The old man smiled as he eloquently said

“—Go and love something. Whether it be yourself. Or even something intangible. Love, if you don’t have a heart which loves something, then you won’t be able to reach someone who has love. The object that you love will appear in front of you, and at that time, you will — have ‘power’ within your body.”

After Strada said that, he returned to his farming work.

“First, you should continue to chase that Sekiryuutei kid. Because he is at the mercy of love, he lives with love. Compared to these old bones[141], you’re of a similar age to him yet his presence is more than ten thousand times that of yours.”

The Sekiryuutei Hyoudou Issei who lives because of love— Because of those words, Cao Cao recalled the previous times when he encountered Hyoudou Issei in his mind.

…That’s right, not only was that man loved by others, he loved others, which was why he fought against me face to face. That was the foundation of the Sekiryuutei, Hyoudou Issei—.

Cao Cao smiled as he looked at his spear.

“Will the you that is remembered by this spear also pursue that ‘love’?”

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**Notes**

1. Buongiorno: A greeting in Italian which means Good morning.
2. Pagan God: A god from a religion other than Christianity.
3. The term used here is 異形, which means something irregular or alien. In this context, occult/supernatural seems to fit.
4. Strada refers to himself as ryokotsu (老骨 = old bones) which is another way of calling himself an old man.

# Life.0

The [DxD] team was currently gathered in the VIP room which was in the upper level of the Hyoudou residence. I — Hyoudou Issei, the Gremory household that I belonged to, the Sitris, [Brave Saints], Azazel-sensei, and other members were all firmly focused on the video which was projected onto the screen in front of us. Shown on the screen were the Underworld's TV channels, all of which were news programs, the text at the bottom of the screen read things like:

[Sudden accident in the Rating Game!?]

[Champion Belial has disappeared during the middle of the match!]

[Phoenix family's third son, eldest daughter and Champion have disappeared together!]

……That's right, the information that Sona-zenkaichou received was the same as that which was displayed on the bottom of the screen right now; something had happened in the match between Raiser and Champion Belial. During the match, in a corner of the arena which was a blind spot for the camera — the two people had continued their fight in a dome shaped cavern. Raiser, the Champion and Ravel who was also present had all suddenly disappeared. After we learned of this news, we once again confirmed the information. We then watched the video recording of the game. Indeed, after they entered a cave which was not captured by a camera, something which we could not see occurred, and the three of them had simply vanished. Only by looking at the recording from outside

the cave, it may have been related to a blue light which was emitted from the entrance of the cave. It was determined that the light came from inside the cave.

There was still no news about the three people who had disappeared. Taking into account the current situation, the game managers, the Underworld's government, army and police force had all begun to take action. …To stop my body from trembling, I was clenching my fists. ……Ravel! Raiser! My precious kohai, and manager Ravel. She had agreed to support me in my path to achieving my ambitions… …Raiser as well; after his trauma, it was finally his comeback match. He had once given up, but he had now stood up once again with a reignited passion. He was obviously looking forward to the match with the Champion more than anyone else… Having noticed the anger, sadness and anxiety in my heart, Rias wrapped her hand around my fist. Rias asked Azazel-sensei

"So, the whereabouts of Raiser, Ravel and the Champion Diehauser Belial-sama are all unknown right?"

Sensei raised his index finger and said

"Firstly, what can be confirmed is that before the three people disappeared, the game system's emergency program was triggered."

—Hmm! ……The game system's emergency program? What was that? I had never heard of it before. Aside from Rias and Sona-zenkaichou, some people knew about it, but all the other members were the same as me and had clueless expressions. After Sona-zenkaichou saw our reactions, she began to explain.

"Originally, in order to respond to any kinds of situations, there was a corresponding set of procedures for professional Rating Games. For example, if the location of the match was destroyed more than was expected, then they would initiate a procedure to repair it."

…That is to say, these emergency procedures were designed to respond to events and situations which went beyond what was expected. That was what happened in the match between Raiser and the Champion.

“So what happened?”

After Rias asked that, I went forward to ask sensei

“Is it possible that Qlippoth attacked the match!?”

“That aspect is currently being investigated, but one thing which is certain is — there is a high possibility that there was improper conduct during the game.”

“—What!?”

Hearing this, everyone was just as surprised as I was! Improper conduct; which meant that something illegal happened in the game!?

“That’s prohibited! Could it be the Champion!?”

I couldn’t help blurting out that I thought it was the Champion. I didn’t think at all that Raiser and Ravel could have improper conduct. But, sensei undauntedly answered me with a serious expression

“……The managers believes that it’s the opposite.”

…Raiser had improper conduct? No, that wasn’t possible! That man, although very arrogant, as a noble he had a lot of pride, and didn’t think much. But, he was absolutely honest towards this Rating Game. At the very least, I could understand that attitude. He also had Ravel with him. It was impossible for such a thing to happen. She was my precious manager. She had promised that she would do a lot of great things in the future with me. An outstanding girl like her couldn’t possibly have improper conduct, it was impossible for her to have some conspiracy plan. After Rias realised my thoughts, she gripped my hand even tighter.

“Ise, I understand. You and I are the same. …For Raiser to have improper conduct, that’s impossible. It wasn’t easy for him to get over things and stand up again. And he also has Ravel by his side, those siblings would definitely not allow improper conduct.”

“Well, then it really is the Champion Belial…right?”

Kiba softly said as he used his hand to support his chin. He had an expression which couldn’t be read. Although Kiba couldn’t match up

to Rias, he still knew more than me about Rating Games. Especially for the Champion, his familiarity and knowledge would be even greater. Kiba had seen quite a few of his matches. Kiba had said before that his games were very honest, his tactics were well refined, and that he preferred winning fairly over a surprise attack. Just as his name suggested, he was a true champion. …Whether it was Raiser or The Emperor Belial, it was hard to believe that either side would engage in improper conduct… Towards this emergency situation and the unknown safety of the Phoenix siblings, I was both confused and uneasy. Then, Akeno-san calmly asked Azazel-sensei

"…Azazel-sensei, don't you have any ideas about this?"

Everyone's gaze was directed towards sensei.

"Is that true?"

Hearing my question, sensei raised his hands and sighed.

"…I can't say it. But, if it's really as I think, the Phoenix siblings whose whereabouts are unknown shouldn't be as bad as its being imagined. I'm really sorry that I can't say any more right now, but if you believe in what I've said, then believe that those two are safe."

—What! Really!? Raiser and Ravel are both safe!? Sensei really did have an idea about this situation! I didn't say it to sensei… Azazel-sensei, he's dealt with all sorts of situations up till now that he's not only been able to cope with, but also handle well. If even this sensei said so, then there was no reason not to believe it…. A small communication magic circle appeared beside Rias's ear. After listening to the report which came through, Rias told everyone

"It was from onii-sama. The Maou's side are beginning to search for the whereabouts of Raiser, Ravel and Emperor Belial."

To be honest, I really wanted to rush out immediately to look for Ravel. But, even the Devils' side was moving out, sensei also said that they were safe, so I would just be causing trouble for everyone if I rushed out there…if I allowed my emotions to dictate my actions…the enemy might just be waiting for that. Because the enemy that I was going up against was just like that—. As I was

unable to reach an important mediator or opponent, I could only grind my teeth, with my right fist pushing heavily against my left hand. …Raiser, Ravel, Ravel! Rias placed her hand on my shoulder and said with a melancholic tone

“…Ise, it’s painful right now, but we need to believe in onii-sama and Azazel.”

After a deep breath, I nodded in response. Raiser, Ravel…please, you must be safe.

# Life.1
# A Restless Career Consultation

## Part 1

Morning, a few days later— …Although the weather was perfectly fine, my mood still hadn't gotten better. I had gotten up early, but I hadn't been able to sleep well since that day because I was worried about Ravel's safety. It wasn't just me; it also applied for my nakama. I hadn't slept well last night, and was rather gloomy during breakfast. …Perhaps because Rias and Asia slept together with me, they also found it difficult to fall asleep as there was no news, so we discussed various pointless things. At breakfast, it was just like usual with my parents at the table, along with Kuroka and Ophis. Because our expressions were different from usual, there was no dialogue across the table… While silently eating breakfast, kaa-san sighed and then said to me

"Ise! Tomorrow is the three-way interview isn't it? Do you understand?"

…I see, it was that. Tomorrow was the three-way career interview.

"…Yeah, I know."

—That was the only reply I could give. Kaa-san replied to me with a hint of astonishment.

“Really, you could be more enthusiastic with your answer. Tomorrow is the three-way interview to discuss your future isn’t it? I was just asking whether you actually understand that.”

Kaa-san smiled as she said to Asia

“Asia-chan, I will also go.”

“Yes, thank you, okaa-san.!!!”

Asia faced kaa-san as she gently smiled.

“Really, unlike you, Asia-chan is so lovely…I really can’t understand boys of your age.”

Tou-san folded his newspaper and calmly said to me

“Ise, for a man, a career is very important. Tomorrow, you need to be more enthusiastic to discuss this together with kaa-san and your sensei.”

These parents were somewhat long-winded. I nonchalantly responded ‘yes yes’ as I ate. My parents had broken the silence, and Xenovia also began speaking

“Career consultations huh. If it’s from my side, it should be Sister Griselda…although she’s quite busy, that’s to be expected.”

Irina had also turned her head to discuss the career consultations

“For me…both papa and mama are overseas, so I should be the same as Xenovia, also having Sister Griselda come…”

Is Sister Griselda responsible for everyone under the care of the Church? Well, Irina’s parents were in England, so they wouldn’t be able to make it in time. Rossweisse-san followed

“Although I’m not the sensei for your class, I will help you prepare some information. Anyway, a career is very important. Discussing this with your parents while using your own ability to choose your career path is very important.”

Hm, there is weight to what Rossweisse-san said. When she was a

Valkyrie, not only did she have talent, she was also a genius when it came to magic. While she was in charge of looking after that jisan Odin, she didn't have a chance to display her abilities. But now, her talent has finally produced results. Her age wasn't too far off from mine yet Rossweisse-san had experienced many things… Kaa-san faced Rias and Akeno-san as she said

"Rias-san and Akeno-san are both waiting for their graduation. Their career paths have already been determined, so they can take it easy until spring."

"That would be great if it were the case, but there is a need for preparation, so we can't be carefree and relaxed."

"Ufufu, that's because we'll be blossoming female university students."

Kaa-san smiled in response to Rias and Akeno-san.

"Yes, that is also true. You'll be university students. It won't be the same as high school, so preparation is quite important."

University life huh, I can't yet imagine it. By this time next year, will I be able to understand?

"What about you Koneko? Who will be coming to the three-way interview?"

Xenovia asked Koneko-chan.

"…For me"

Before she could finish, Kuroka interjected

"I will go ~♪? Because I'm her aneki."

"…Although I said that you don't have to come, from the looks of it, you seem enthusiastic."

Koneko-chan sighed with her eyes half open.

"That's so cold, really Shirone. Don't worry and leave it to me. I'll just tempt them with something like 'I really appreciate my family's child which is in your care ~♪'? The records document will be done just

like that.”

“…My class homeroom teacher is a woman.”

Koneko-chan stared as she replied.

“Ara ara, this is really a headache nyan.”

Although she said that, Kuroka’s expression seemed troubled as she put a piece of tamagoyaki [121] into her mouth. Rias sighed after seeing the responses from all the current students.

“Although you all have different thoughts, a career consultation is also very important. Why don’t you let Akeno and I who can attend school freely take care of other things; you guys should properly think about your school life and future, do you understand?”

“Yes.”

We replied in unison to Rias, who was both our elder and upperclassman. …Career counselling huh. …The figure of Ravel who promised that we would work hard together flashed through my mind…. If I remained like this, my mind wouldn’t be very stable. Now was the time to believe in Sirzechs-sama, Azazel-sensei and Rias. I shook my head and said “another bowl!” as I extended my bowl towards kaa-san.

While I was at the door putting on my shoes as I prepared to leave for school, Kuroka suddenly came over to ask me

“You’re worried about Birdy-chan, right?”

Birdy-chan — that was Ravel. That was what Kuroka called Ravel.

“Of course. I can’t wait to go find her now, but…”

“What the former governor said makes you believe that she’s safe right? Since it’s that former governor, isn’t it better to just honestly believe in him?”

Interrupting me, Kuroka said that. This person, I didn’t think that she’d really believe Azazel-sensei. So that’s why she was acting like she usually does at breakfast. …No, perhaps it was inherent for her

to continue living like this without anything changing. Kuroka said to Koneko-chan who had finished putting on her shoes next to me

“Shirone, although you’re worried about Birdy-chan, occasionally trusting adults is fine isn’t it?”

“…Occasionally, I can’t trust onee-sama.”

Kuroka laughed at her imouto’s comment.

“Nya haha, really, ‘occasionally’ you can’t trust me.”

Kuroka’s expression was really gentle. Talking with her little sister, day-to-day life, she was completely enjoying it. This person would probably be the happiest one among us right now. It was because she was able to live together again like this with her precious imouto that she had separated with.

“Kuroka-san, I’m ready.”

Le Fay stood beside Kuroka as she reported in. Kuroka said

“Le Fay and I will use our own way to look for Birdy-chan. I’m also worried about her right now. So—”

Kuroka hugged Koneko-chan and I as she continued

“You guys should worry about your school life. If you don’t take your career consultation seriously, Birdy-chan will get angry right?”

—Mn. …I never thought that Kuroka would say such thoughtful words. Even Koneko-chan’s eyes were slightly moist. Yes, it was just like Kuroka said. If we don’t take our career consultation seriously, Ravel would definitely be angry when she returns. Although that manager was very cute, she was also very strict.

“Ah, you don’t need to say it for me to know.”

“…Yeah, that’s right.”

Kuroka smiled as she looked at Koneko-chan and I. Even while we were worried about Ravel’s safety, the days went by.

# Part 2

The next day after school— Today was the arranged day for the three-way career consultation. Students took turns according to their student number, and they simply waited at the school before that. The people who had club activities would continue with their club activities until it was time to begin. That was why we were gathered in the club room of the old school building waiting for our turn. For now, the parents of each of the members would gather in the old school building, and wait together with their children until it was their turn. Rias and Akeno-san were graduate students, so they hadn't come, and were still looking for information about Ravel. …We were also eager to help out, but since we were told to concentrate on our career consultation, we had no choice but to wait. While we were chatting amongst ourselves, the first to appear in front of us was—

"Hello everyone. Yaa, Irina-chan."

It was actually Irina's otou-san!? Was this for real!? He actually rushed over all the way from England!? Even as his daughter, Irina was quite surprised.

"Papa!? How did you get here!?"

Irina exclaimed. From the looks of it, he didn't contact her beforehand and just suddenly came over. …Since you came over, you should explain it to your own daughter. Doesn't this also surprise you? Irina's otou-san laughed heartily.

"Isn't this to be expected? This is my cute daughter's future career consultation isn't it? As a father, of course I have to skip work and rush over."

"Really papa, Michael-sama will get angry you know!?"

Irina puffed out her cheeks as she got angry…but Michael-sama wouldn't get angry over a little thing like this. Towards his angry daughter, Irina's otou-san laughed heartily as he pretended not to

notice.

“I give up, of course it was a joke. Something just came up in Japan so I rushed over. No, however, my Angel daughter looks so cute when she’s angry.”

Irina’s papa really never changes. We smiled as we looked on at that father and daughter pair. Suddenly, Irina’s otou-san came over to me and whispered

(“By the way, Issei-kun”)

(“Hmm, yes?”)

Irina’s otou-san suddenly asked me with a dirty look

(“That…did you use it? How did it go?”)

—What the hell! That, he’s almost certainly talking about that room! The room that Heaven developed to allow Angels to do ecchi things with other races without worries in it! All that was needed was to mount the special doorknob onto the door, and you would be able to enter this mysterious room. This was the room that Michael-san personally instructed to be made; I really can’t understand what Heaven is thinking!

(“Th-That, I…how should I say it…”)

I didn’t know how to reply! Hold on, in reality, the only ones who used it were Irina and Xenovia which just made me embarrassed…if they normally invited me, it’s the place that I’d want to dive into. But, those two girls replace the doorknob when I plan to use the bathroom, and when I come back exhausted from my devil’s job and want to return to my own room, they run over and pull me in. They simply never consider the situation and keep giving me surprises! At such times I could only say things like ‘let’s just go into that room separately now…’ But I didn’t! Not at all! I really wanted to tell them that their timing was too weird! Well, I even if I said that I wanted to, the other girls would also see it, so I really hope that they don’t come without thinking about the trouble! Basically, for Irina (+ Xenovia) who can’t read the mood at all, they’re too obsessed with that item. Most recently, Akeno-san and Kuroka borrowed it to use.

…Anyway, please just let me use the bathroom.

(“I’m looking forward to my grandchildren.”)

What! Irina’s otou-san pat my back as he said so…he actually said ‘grandchildren’ all of a sudden! He’s really similar to my parents. So that’s why he often talks with my parents. Sure enough, like attracts like, and people gather together like that.

“Hold on, papa, what are you saying to Ise-kun?”

Irina seemed rather concerned about the whispered conversation between her otou-san and I. Originally, that should’ve been a secret from daughter, but this ossan triumphantly announced it out loud.

“Hahaha, I was just asking about the situation with that room!”

Hearing him say that, Irina face suddenly blushed!

“—Mmm! R-Really. Papa, please don’t talk about that topic in front of your daughter and her childhood friend!”

Irina became even angrier, but her otou-san —

“Irina-chan is also cute when she gets angry.”

Not caring at all, he continued to laugh cheerfully. …Ah, I really can’t cope with this otou-san every time. —While I was thinking about this, it seemed like Xenovia was enjoying herself as she watched this.

“Fufufu, that side of Irina really never changes.”

Due to the affairs of the Student Council, Xenovia came to the clubroom a lot less often. Because today was the career consultation, she had finished her business with the Student Council early, and waited for her turn in the clubroom.

“Speaking of you Xenovia, is Griselda-san coming?”

After hearing my question, Xenovia nodded.

“Ah, originally that was the case, but she’s rather busy, so today it’s just one person today—”

“One person? What are you talking about? Hello, Xenovia.”

Eh, the person who opened the door and walked in was Griselda-san! Xenovia, who thought that she wasn’t coming was astounded.

“S-S-Si-Sister Griselda! …Y-You came.”

Hearing Xenovia’s surprised tone of voice, Griselda-san sighed as she said

“Of course. Your guardian is me. So, we can finally confirm the content of the three-way interview when we go over there.”

She said that as she grabbed Xenovia’s hand and pulled her over to one side.

“I-I don’t need any confirmation. My future career path has already been confirmed.”

“That future that you’ve decided on is ‘most likely sketchy’ and rough. Listen to me, and come with me to go over it again.”

With this kind of oppressive force, even if it’s Xenovia—

“Uh, I’m no match for Sister…”

She gave in. The two of them sat on the sofa as they reconfirmed the things which would be discussed with the teacher. In front of their guardians, Irina and Xenovia both showed expressions which were rarely seen, it was rather refreshing. For the other members… It was kaa-san for Asia and I, Koneko-chan had Kuroka as her guardian, so who would be coming for Kiba and Gasper?

“Hey, Kiba, Gasper, who’s coming for you guys?”

“The Gremory family sends someone over every year for me, there are servants who would look somewhat related to me. I think Gasper is the same as me?s”

Kiba asked Gasper, and Gya-suke answered with ‘yes’. Ah — so that’s how it is. The Gremory family has a lot of servants, so if they looked closely, there should be people who look similar in appearance to Kiba or Gya-suke.

“By the way, how is Tosca-san?”

Recently, Kiba had reunited with his former comrade who had survived — Tosca-san, so I asked about her current condition. Tosca-san would occasionally come over to the Hyoudou household to learn about Japan from Rias, Asia, as well as Koneko-chan. “Mn, thanks for taking care of her. Although she was someone related to the Church, for day-to-day life, she’s been taken care of by Rias, Koneko-chan, Xenovia and Irina-san. Surprisingly, Kiba and Asia introduced her to Kiryuu, who also became good friends with her. I heard that she taught Tosca-san a lot of things but…so that Tosca-san doesn’t become a perverted girl, I’ll have to keep an eye on her.

“For Valerie and Tosca-san to get along with each other, that also makes me feel at ease.”

Gya-suke added. I see, she’s also able to get along well with Valerie, so that’s good; it was better than anything that she was able to live peacefully in this town together with her new nakama. Knock knock, someone knocked on the door.

“…Umm, is this the right place?”

The person who appeared in the club room was kaa-san. Asia and I became a little uneasy—. During the time that they were waiting, kaa-san and Irina’s otou-san began a conversation between parents with a congenial atmosphere; Irina and I were both embarrassed about them!

It was finally my turn for the three-way interview. Asia had already finished her interview before me. Sitting inside the classroom were just three people, my homeroom teacher, kaa-san and I. Since high school started, I always felt that such interviews were difficult. I was the type of student that didn’t want to be present at these interviews. After all, the two adults who were usually the most complicated (parent and homeroom teacher) were facing each other as I sat in between them—. Even kaa-san had done up her makeup to come to school. At a time when boys my age couldn’t stand it, I definitely didn’t want my classmates or friends to see this! Within the silent classroom, kaa-san and I sat side by side, and after we greeted sensei who was sitting opposite us, we began to discuss my attitude

at school and academic performance. Then, five minutes later, it finally came to the main topic of the interview, as we began to discuss my career. My homeroom teacher said

“Hyoudou-kun’s desired progression is to study at Kuoh Academy University after graduation.”

“Yes.”

I replied. That’s right, first I have to go to university, and since I could enter the Kuoh Academy University, I’d naturally want to continue on with the escalator system [131] into university. …There were also students who wanted to enter other universities, but there wasn’t a particular university that I was aiming for. Kuoh Academy University’s evaluation was very good, so I planned to continue my education there. Asia, Xenovia, Irina, Kiba ( + Kiryuu, Matsuda, Motohama) also had a similar opinion to me. In other words, even if we did go to university, we would be together. Those younger than me were also thinking of the same thing; they hoped to be together again in university after two years with Rias and Akeno-san who would graduate before us. It would be nice to set up an [Occult Research Club] at the university. After the teacher thought that there were no problems with my plans for progression, she asked me again

“Hyoudou-kun, have you decided about what comes afterwards? Have you discussed with your okaa-san?”

Hearing this question, kaa-san placed her hand on her cheek as she looked slightly perplexed.

“…No, my husband and I have not—”

Ah — yes…. Although I said that I had to go to university, I didn’t talk about what came afterwards. I said to sensei and kaa-san as I scratched my cheek with a finger

“Oh, that…at the moment I plan to work under Rias…buchou, senpai, no, Rias Gremory-senpai’s otou-san…”

What should I say on this occasion? I couldn’t say that it was a Devil job, so it should be fine to say one of the Gremory family’s

companies, right? After all, not only in the Underworld, but even in the human world the Gremory family had a lot of companies.

“Senpai’s otou-san owns a lot of companies, and I plan to find work there after graduating from university.”

As I said this, sensei seemed to become more interested.

“Gremory-san’s? Ah, Hyoudou-kun is indeed a member of the Occult Research Club.”

My teacher then went ‘Oh, I see’ as they nodded. Originally, Rias was one of the school’s celebrities, the school itself had a connection to the Gremory family. The Gremory name simply had to be mentioned, and the class teachers would then agree.

“Come to think of it, Gremory-san and Argento-san are both living with Hyoudou-kun’s family. So, Gremory-san’s parents have spoken to you, Hyoudou-kun, and have discussed this matter with you?”

Kaa-san answered

“Eh, that’s right. Gremory-san has visited a few times, and has even helped us renovate our house…our family is really indebted to Gremory-san.”

That’s true, our family really has been taken care of by them. That kind of a large-scale transformation, as well as the work following it; we were truly grateful for it… Sensei asked further

“So to say, that’s the reason why Hyoudou-kun plans to work at one of Gremory-san’s companies? Have you spoken with Gremory-san about that before?”

“Ah, yes. Presumably, oyago-san[141] knows about it.”

I replied…he should probably be aware of it. As a member of Rias’s peerage, he should more or less accept me. Also, when we went to the Underworld during our summer vacation, he did mention that peerage members could obtain their own territory. Kaa-san asked beside me

“Certainly, I remember that they operate travel agencies and hotels

in various countries right? In Japan; Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and other large cities have hotel chains owned by them. Ah yes, they're also involved in the film industry. That's just what I've heard from Rias-san."

"Ka-Kaa-san, that's rather detailed."

They do indeed have a hotel in Kyoto…and their business in the film industry is related to me. After kaa-san listened to me, she continued

"Remember, in the first trimester, wasn't there a classroom observation? At that time, didn't her otou-san and onii-san come over to our house?"

Ah — such a thing did happen. It was at the end of the first trimester. The classroom topic became clay moulding. After the classroom observation, Rias's otou-san and Sirzechs-sama met with my parents and began talking, coming over to my house afterwards.

"Well, at that time, did Rias…senpai's oyago-san say anything?"

"Eh, he did. 'I hope that in the future you'll be able to entrust your son to us' he said. For us, that was an impossible request…well, what do you really plan to do? We haven't properly asked you what you think, but we do hope that you'll have a good think about it."

Kaa-san asked me, as if trying to confirm my reply. I see, so that's what the Gremory side said. It's a given that I'll continue as a member of the Rias's peerage, and I do also want to thank the Gremory family for their care. The House of Gremory truly are the best high-class Devils! Although we're grateful for the kindness of the Gremory family, my parents still wanted to confirm what my intentions were and respect me, I really am thankful to them…. Tou-san and kaa-san both thought that I might choose another path. …I really don't want to let my parents worry. Besides, I'm still — still hiding my true identity from them. I nodded, and said to kaa-san and sensei

"Well, that's right. After graduation from university, I'll work at senpai's otou-san's company. But, I have other dreams…I want to

become independent from the Gremory's companies in the future… and set up a company on my own."

Yes, my further dreams are — to become independent from Rias, have my own peerage, and have my own career as a Devil while I participate in the Rating Games! Besides, I'll almost live forever, so if my dreams and ambitions aren't achieved, then it won't be worth the effort; that's what the older Devils said to me before! With higher aims, even more dreams and desires could be achieved! I revealed my thoughts to them on the spot. …Of course, I disguised everything that was related to Devils.

"It might be a subsidiary company of the Gremory family, but even so, I want to start a company by relying on myself. I want to establish a company following my own ideas. Establishing it in this town would be nice, or establishing it in senpai's home country would also be fine."

Using Kuoh Town as a starting point would be alright. At that time, I don't know what I'd do if my territory overlapped with Rias's territory. At that time, it would probably be best if we clearly discuss it. Just then, I revealed all of my thoughts and ideas…kaa-san beside me was somewhat surprised.

"You actually considered that much?"

Although I said that, she didn't seem to believe me, and her expression showed that it was completely unexpected.

"Ah, well, I suppose. After all, it is my own future, so I should at least have thought about it to this degree."

Although that was what I said…. About that, I haven't spoken to my parents about that matter, so they would be surprised. Even if they didn't look at me that way, I still had dreams. Although being a harem king is my top dream, I couldn't possibly have said that! Kaa-san would definitely have hit my head, and that would've given my sensei quite a shock. My homeroom teacher said with a smile to kaa-san

"Okaa-san, your son, Issei-kun is unexpectedly popular in class you

know? Especially with transfer students from overseas; Argento-san, Shidou-san, and Quarta-san are often under his care. I also see that all the time. This isn't an easy thing. If you want to know more about the popular foreign cultures in the school, then you can just ask Issei-kun; that's what we say even between teachers."

…My reputation within the school was never very good, there was basically never any praise. Recently, my reputation with the girls seems to have improved. Kiba…has also been telling the girls good things about me. The way that they've been looking at me has changed little by little. Indeed, people should have friends like these! If it was Matsuda and Motohama, they wouldn't be able to do such things! That handsome guy really is amazing. Kiba! Thank you so much! —While I was thinking about that, sensei, who just praised me, sighed helplessly.

"It's just that, a little too much perversion has become a problem. There have been complaints by female students…"

"I'm really sorry! I'm really sorry! Come on, Ise! You also need to apologise!"

Really kaa-san, she immediately pressed my head down and apologised as soon as she heard this. Uh — since she said that, I had no choice but to apologise!

"I'm sorry for being too perverted!"

I'm really sorry about being of this age! In this way, with shame, hot-blooded passion, and finally an apology, the three-way interview concluded. But, my dreams of the future — also included processing ahead together with Asia, Xenovia and Ravel. So, Ravel…. You definitely need to be safe.

At dinner that night—

"Kakakaka! It's been a long time since I could drink like this!"

At the dinner table, tou-san was gleefully drinking sake. Tou-san, who heard from kaa-san about the contents of the three-way interview, was impressed by the future that I spoke of. He was delighted, yet at the same time, he was also crying.

“Oh! That Ise, that son of mine who only has a strong libido! I didn’t expect that he’d actually considered that kind of a future…”

Tou-san’s sakana [151] was actually me. It was really quite shameful. All the girls smiled slightly from the side as they watched tou-san… After kaa-san heard what tou-san said, she also fervently said

“Really, I was also quite surprised by it. When I heard that Gremory-san planned to let Ise work at one of his companies after graduation from university, I was over the moon. But Ise, you actually considered so much…right now, I’m so moved that I want to cry.”

Aahhh, she really began to wipe tears from the corner of her eyes! With these two people in my family, I’m going to die of embarrassment. Please quickly stop!

“…It’s really not such a big deal, nowadays, high school students can consider their own future early on.”

—Although I said that in order to cover up my embarrassment, tou-san and kaa-san were even happier. Tou-san then raised his cup up as he said to kaa-san

“No matter what, today is a day to celebrate with sake! Kaa-san, bring me that expensive bottle of sake that Sirzechs-san gave me just a while ago!”

“Yes, yes, I know. Really, you’re not like an adult at all.”

Kaa-san got up to get the sake from the kitchen. Ah — ah, really, those two people. My situation doesn’t have to keep getting repeated. I know the reason…it’s just something that I said at the time. Sitting beside me, Rias said

“Ise, you need to tell your parents about the future.”

“Eh? Well, just let it be. I want to say it at the most suitable time.”

Ever since I had reincarnated as a Devil, I’d encountered all sorts of situations, so I could never find the right time to tell them. But this future goal was only because I had reincarnated as a Devil, and was completely different from what I had in mind last year. Last year, I

just vaguely thought ‘For the time being, I’ll just go to university first’. My parents were also aware of that. Rossweisse-san also said to me with a serious look

“This cannot do. You need to properly speak to your family about your future. If you don’t properly explain it to them, they might not be able to understand, and it may even get out of hand. You didn’t clearly talk about your future in second year with your family, so your family and teachers at school went through a lot of trouble, Ise-kun.”

Those were words which really suited a teacher…. But I had nothing to say. What Rossweisse-san said was correct. Although I constantly encountered things after I reincarnated, I talked to my family less than I did before…. After hearing what Rossweisse-san said, led by Xenovia, everyone else agreed.

“As expected of a teacher of Kuoh Academy.”

Koneko-chan also nodded

“…Although she sometimes forgets her position, she really is a teacher.”

Yeah, truly, she is a teacher. After her cheeks were gradually dyed red, Rossweisse-san lightly coughed to clear her throat and then continued

“Everyone present here will be working in one of the Gremory family’s companies after their graduation from university, right? Even among us teaching staff, we refer to you guys as the [Gremory prospective members].”

Eh — so that’s what we’re called. [Gremory prospective members] huh. The majority of people here belonged to that, and it was just Irina who was associated with the Church that wasn’t.

“By the way, are there also [Sitri prospective members]?”

—Rias asked. Ah, the members of the Sitri peerage. Sona-zenkaichou is also the daughter of a wealthy person, and the teachers also knew that. While we were discussing information about the school, otou-san cried as he held Rias’s hand, while he

bowed his head and said

“Not only Ise, even Asia-chan has received an invitation from your family’s company, Gremory-san. The future of my family’s two children is really bright! I really can’t thank the Gremory family enough. Thank you so much, Rias-san!”

Aaaahhh, he put his arm around Rias after he got drunk. Ah, I really couldn’t stop him in time! Although Rias was startled, she immediately calmed down and smiled as she said

“No, for us, we just want to ensure that we have these valuable human resources early. On this basis, whether it’s Ise or Asia, my chichi and ani both think that will be valuable in the future.”

“Uooh, I’m really so grateful, for you to say this, I’m even more relieved!”

“For Ise to be picked up by Rias-san, our family’s future is really too fortunate.”

Rias’s words caused my parents to shed tears of joy. Asia who was part of that seemed to be at a loss for words, and I could only embarrassingly cover my face with my hands. … Well, if the next time I tell them about the future is something like this, their reaction would certainly be much greater. Next time, I definitely need to talk to them periodically, otherwise I really won’t be able to stand outbursts like this. We children have our own thoughts. After I briefly said that, I continued having dinner with everyone.

After the dinner that was full of embarrassment, everyone went back to doing their own things at night. There was still no update on Ravel; after I killed some time in the living room after taking a shower, I went up to the second floor. …In the corridor of the second floor was an extremely large cardboard box.

“…What’s going on with this cardboard box? Who was it, and why is it here?”

I moved a little bit closer to it…could it be that Gasper was inside? Only he would go in there. But why was he hiding near my room then? I felt that it was rather odd, so I opened the box to take a look

—

“…”

Inside I saw a girl with blonde hair. Sitting inside in a triangular shape was — Valerie! After her red eyes noticed me, she laughed lightly.

“Ah, hello.”

“V-Va-Vaalerriee—!”

The corridor echoed with my wail of surprise. Of course! A cardboard box stood there in the corridor quite naturally. I thought that Gasper was inside, and didn’t expect to see Valerie as soon as

I looked inside!

“Yes, it’s me.”

After saying that, she immediately stood up and steeped out of the cardboard box. Some time ago, as a reward for suppressing the uprising of the Church’s warriors, we obtained a fragment of the genuine Holy Grail from a powerful figure within the Church. After turning it into a necklace, Azazel-sensei gave it to her. That way, it could be said that we successfully helped her to regain consciousness. Perhaps because she was a half-vampire, after regaining her consciousness, she was immediately able to get out of bed and walk around…but no matter what, she still needed to be careful, so her actions were limited. …But, I really didn’t expect that she’d come to my house, and also that she’d show up in the form of a cardboard box.

“W-Why were you in that cardboard box…”

She had just regained consciousness, so her movement wasn’t very good, which is why I asked her. I was worried about Valerie, but she replied back with a smile

“I was imitating Gasper. Gasper only needs to get into a cardboard box to calm down, so I also wanted to try it.”

…I-I see. Just what kind of cultural knowledge did she learn after awakening to Japanese culture for the first time! No, it can’t be certain that Valerie asked Gasper about this herself.

“…Ah, whatever. So, how is your body?”

I sighed as I asked her. Valerie monotonously replied to me with a lazy tone

“It’s okay, thanks to the care. Thanks to transportation magic circles, I can come over to your house for a bit. Today, I came over together with Gasper.”

Also, it would be quite strenuous for her if she came directly over by walking. Getting around using transportation magic circles was somewhat better. Speaking of which, Gya-suke also came over.

“Gasper is currently together with Koneko-san preparing notes for Ravel-san. I didn’t want to disturb them so I came out to visit here.”

Valerie said. So Gasper was actually with Koneko-chan writing notes for Ravel-san who was absent from school… He really was a good kohai who did things for the sake of his friends. Suddenly, Valerie stared in a certain direction of the corridor, with her head turned sideways as she said

“Come to think of it, I can’t hear the voices of ‘everyone’…. It’s really strange.”

—Hm….‘Everyone’ referred to the side effect that came with the Holy Grail that dwelled within her. She could see the people wandering about in the otherworld. She was even able to communicate with them. Sensei originally said that this was impossible. And if she continued to do so, her mind would be damaged. When we saw Valerie before, because she had too much contact with people from the other side, it had caused her mind to become damaged. But the current Valerie no longer used the Holy Grail which dwelled within her body, and she also had a necklace which was made from the real Holy Grail, so she looked much better than she did when we saw her in Romania. I didn’t want to pursue the topic further, so I changed the topic as I asked her with a smile

“If there’s anything inconvenient for you in your everyday life, just say so, and everyone will help you.”

“…Eh, if you say so.”

Valerie raised a finger and pressed it against her chin as she began thinking—.

“There doesn’t seem to be anything. —If I’m able to be together with Gasper, then I won’t be lonely.”

…I see, as long as she has Gya-suke she won’t be lonely. Those two people were finally able to live together in peace. It wasn’t easy for her to awaken from her deep sleep, so it simply wouldn’t do if they didn’t live together happily. Valerie placed both her hands together as if praying and said to me

“Also, for everyone to stay by my side, I’m really happy, it’s almost as if it’s a dream…”

To say that, it made me really happy. Precisely because we had gone to the country of the Tepes’ faction to fight before. Yeah, it wouldn’t do if we didn’t spend each day happily together with Valerie! We also hoped for a friendly and peaceful life— Suddenly, the thought of Ravel’s unknown safety flashed across my mind again. I felt a bit lonely. Noticing this, Valerie said to me

“Ravel Phoenix-san”

Valerie looked up at the ceiling and continued

“Ravel-san and her onii-sama Raiser-san, probably, are still alive. I think you will meet them again soon.”

Where did she see that, and how did she notice it? Valerie seemed to have felt something as she said that.

“…Why do you think so?”

Valerie, having heard my question, made a puzzled expression.

“…Although I can’t really find the words to say it, I just know…”

…I see, if someone else said that, there wouldn’t be much credibility, but since it was Valerie who had the Holy Grail that her life depended on within her body, it was a lot more credible.

“Thank you. How should I say it, I feel like you’ve saved me a little.”

I thanked Valerie. To be honest, I was still worried. But these words of Valerie gave me the feeling of being saved. Valerie continued to smile.

“In fact…I should be the one thanking you. —For Gasper and me to be together again, I’m really grateful, thank you.”

Valerie Tepes showed me a bright smile.

“Ah — Valerie! This is where you were! You can’t run out of Koneko-chan’s room! Your body hasn’t fully recovered!”

Frantically running down the stairs was Gasper. From the looks of it, when he noticed that Valerie had disappeared from the room he anxiously went to search for her. For Gasper, as long as it had something to do with Valerie, he would become panic-stricken, he didn't have the temperament of a boy at all.

"It's not a good time to move around, you need to stay close to me."

"Ufufu, Gasper is really strict."

Look at that. Gasper was quite reliable. After getting a girl that they need to protect, boys will continue to grow stronger. Looking at these two, my heart felt like it was healed. Then, as Valerie said, her prediction came true.

## Part 3

At noon the next day— The members of [DxD] were urgently called to the clubroom of the Occult Research Club. Azazel-sensei looked at all of us as he said

"There is definite news."

"Well, well then, sensei!" I stepped forward to ask, and sensei replied

"—Both Raiser Phoenix and Ravel are safe. They also have no serious issues."

—What …I was speechless. Silently, tears flowed out from my eyes. The uneasiness in my heart had finally settled down. My mood finally lightened up. Looking around, my nakama who were also worried about Ravel sighed, feeling at ease.

"Koneko-chan, Ravel, she's safe! That's wonderful!"

"Mn! That's great! Gya-kun! Thank goodness! —It really had us worried to death, baka Ravel! Big idiot…!"

Koneko-chan and Gasper who were together with her in first year both cried. After waiting for us to settle down a bit, sensei added

“The one who ensured their safety was — Maou Ajuka Beelzebub.”

It’s just been one thing after the other.

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**Notes**

1. Okaa-san & Otou-san are more formal whereas Kaa-san & Tou-san are less formal for addressing your own parents.

2. Tamagoyaki: Japanese omelette rolls.

3. Escalator system: Escalator schools in Japan are those which offer education from primary or middle school to university. This means that students enrolled at the school can advance to the next grade without having to take difficult or competitive entrance exams.

4. Oyago-san basically means parent. Here it is used to refer to Gremory-san.

5. Sakana refers to the food which is eaten as an accompaniment to alcohol, as is customary in Japan. These are usually side dishes.

# Parents

That night— After hearing Azazel-sensei's report, the members of [DxD] dispersed first. The day after tomorrow, in order to bring back the siblings Raiser and Ravel Phoenix, they would meet the previously mentioned Maou Ajuka Beelzebub first. After bathing in the large underground bath with Asia, Rias began talking as they walked back up the stairs.

"It really is great that Ravel-san and Raiser-san are safe."

Asia felt at ease as she placed her hand over her chest. Asia, who was worried not just about Ravel, but Raiser as well, said that for Rias, she was a cute imouto. Rias smiled as she replied

"Eh, it truly is good. Although I really trust onii-sama and Azazel, I still felt that something may have happened to them, but my fears actually turned out to be false."

Yes, if by chance that it was true…. There was no such thing as certainty in this world. Rias also understood this principle. In the fight against the Hero faction, Rias's most beloved person — Hyoudou Issei had lost his body. If she recalled the events at the time, it could be considered a miracle that he survived. Originally, even if he died, that would have been understandable. However, something like that happened again. It could have been possible for Raiser and Ravel to have ended up in the worst possible outcome. So when they found out that they were safe, they truly felt happy from the bottom of their hearts. After all, in regards to Raiser, she wanted to defeat him in a professional Rating Game. As for Ravel, as Ise's excellent manager, she had complete faith in her. If he didn't have Ravel, Ise also wouldn't be able to forge ahead smoothly to realise his dreams and ambitions.

Just how did those two people end up with Maou Ajuka Beelzebub? This news was currently confidential, and only a small number of people knew about it, not even all of the high-class Devils knew about it. And there was one thing that prompted further attention. — The whereabouts of Champion Diehauser Belial. Emperor Belial had obviously disappeared along with the Phoenix siblings. Why was

there only news about the Phoenix siblings? Exactly where did Emperor Belial go? …The mystery still had not been solved. There still remained a shadow of unrest in Rias's heart. She understood that this unrest probably pointed in a bad direction. When Cao Cao of the Hero Faction summoned Samael, when they went over to the Tepes Faction, there was always a feeling which couldn't be expressed with words; in the end, the outcome was tragic every time. Precisely because of this, she had an ominous premonition.

After walking up the stairs, in order to get some drinks from the refrigerator, Rias and Asia walked towards the living room.

"Ara, if it isn't Asia-chan and Rias-san."

Ise's haha-ue was fiddling with something on the table of the living room.

"We just came out of the bath. If I may ask, what are you doing, haha-ue-sama?"

Rias and Asia moved closer to take a look out of curiosity —

"Well, the albums."

Ise's haha-ue then picked up and opened a book for Rias and Asia to see.

"Wow, it's a photo album."

Ise's haha-ue had actually laid the living room's table full of photo albums, and displayed within them were Ise's childhood photos.

"Ah, that was Ise. I've also shown these to you before."

They had seen them before in Ise's room, before the incident where they were attacked by Kokabiel. At that time, they accidentally got too excited looking at them. Rias and Asia were both sitting down on the sofa, having each picked up an album to appreciate Ise's childhood photos. Previously, they were too excited about it, and they didn't even notice that each of the photo albums had different titles. They said things like [Issei, First OO]!!!.

"You've really recorded every little step of Ise growing up into

these.”

Rias quietly said as she smiled softly.

“…This is our only son. No matter what, for us, Ise is our cute child. Which is why I occasionally look at these childhood photos, at that time, he really was cute.”

The words of Ise’s haha-ue made both Rias and Asia feel it. —Ise is deeply loved by his parents. It could be felt not only from how his haha-ue was smiling right now and not only from the many photo albums she had; they could truly feel how deeply she loved and cared for Ise. Suddenly, Ise’s haha-ue’s hand stopped when she saw a certain photo.

“Ah — this one.”

Both Rias and Asia’s gaze focused onto the photo that Ise’s haha-ue was pointing at. It was Ise in primary school. He was holding a fishing rod that was much bigger than himself as he stood there proudly.

“This one…what about it?”

Rias asked Ise’s haha-ue.

“This fishing rod was my husband’s favourite fishing rod back then. He was really interested in fishing. He also taught Ise. Although he hasn’t gone fishing recently, he would often go fishing with Ise by the river or sea when he was younger.”

…This was the first time that they had heard of this story. Ise actually went fishing. Although they knew that he ate the fish that he caught when he was training… Ise’s haha-ue continued

“When he was young, Ise was influenced by his chichi and went fishing. But one day, he suddenly stopped fishing.”

“What happened?”

Towards Asia’s question, Ise’s haha-ue gave a wry smile.

“The fishing rod in the photo was broken by Ise.”

What Ise's haha-ue said was — a bad memory of Ise's childhood.

"While they were fishing by the sea, Ise took advantage of the fact that his otou-san was taking a break, so he took his otou-san's fishing rod to go fishing without permission. Ise, he really looked forward to using otou-san's fishing rod, he wanted to use that fishing rod to catch a large fish so that he would be praised…but in the end, he didn't use it the right way and broke it. His otou-san was upset, and Ise apologised as he was crying, and at that time it was quite troublesome."

…Every child would have had this kind of experience when they were young. Rias herself caused trouble when she was young so that she could obtain her parent's praise, but eventually got in big trouble. Her childhood memories suddenly flashed by, and she couldn't believe that she used to be like that. Ise's haha-ue had a slightly lonely expression as she said

"Otou-san simply told him to be careful so as not to let it happen again and forgave him. But Ise, he…never wanted to go fishing again after that time. Perhaps he never forgave himself. That's what that child is like. If he made the other person sad, he himself would also feel sad, and he won't let things go even after an apology."

"…Ise-san being like that, how should I say it? I can more or less understand."

Asia earnestly replied. …Indeed, Rias also agreed. He, Ise, was that kind of a person. Every time a tragedy occurred, even if it wasn't his fault, he would still take responsibility for it. —At such times, if he's able to do it himself, then he'll do it; everyone else would feel sad to see it, but he would still insist on reflecting. Ise still hadn't let go of what happened to Asia. If he was stronger, Asia wouldn't have died. But because of that, he's become as strong as he is now.

"…That child, did he do anything to make Asia-chan sad? No, that child definitely wouldn't have done anything that would make Asia-chan cry. On the contrary, he would feel sad if he couldn't help Asia-chan."

—Well …Rias couldn't say anything. Ise's haha-ue had always been looking at Ise, and understood Ise very well. She felt that her feelings were no match against Ise's haha-ue, perhaps it was more fitting to say that his haha-ue was watching Ise far more carefully than she was.

"…You knew that?"

Hearing Asia's question, Ise's haha-ue smiled.

"Of course I knew, after all, I am one of his parents. Ise, he's very overprotective of Asia-chan. Definitely, in that child's heart, he hasn't forgiven himself, and still holds a grudge."

Although Ise's haha-ue doesn't know their true identity, she was still able to feel the daily changes. This was probably her instinct as his haha-ue. …When there finally came a day when it couldn't be concealed any longer, Rias had already prepared herself for that. Ise's haha-ue continued

"It's the same as Ise no longer fishing. It's certain that at this time, Ise still hasn't forgiven himself."

Ise's haha-ue raised a finger.

"There's only one bad habit that Ise hasn't changed since he was young."

"What bad habit is it?"

Hearing Rias ask that, Ise's haha-ue lowered her head and looked at Ise in a photo of when he was younger.

"If he does something wrong, he definitely won't forgive himself. Simply mentioning that thing will cause him to apologise deeply. And his expression is always the same (pain and regret). You'll know immediately if you look. Ise's otou-san also knows that he has this bad habit. That child will always have that expression."

…Indeed, he was always apologising 'I was wrong', 'I'm sorry', 'sorry' as he was in remorse. Rias recalled that his expression was always the same each time (pain and regret).

“…Rias-san, Asia-chan. Although this isn’t the time to be saying it, let me say it. —Ise, I’m entrusting him to you. He may be perverted and stupid, but he’s an honest person.”

“Yes, ogibo-sama[2].”

“Yes, okaa-san.”

—Okaa-san tightly held the two girl’s hands, as she deeply nodded.

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**Notes**

1. The OO is basically a blank to say that there were many photo albums of “First ____”.

2. gibo (義母) is basically mother-in-law. Rias says this.

# Life.2
# The Truth of the Feast

## Part 1

The next day—. I — Hyoudou Issei, came with Asia to a certain place early in the morning. It was the vast open space underneath Kuoh Town. The hollow dome shaped space was tightly covered by several layers of protective barriers. In the centre was a large round object — a dragon's egg. This egg of a rare dragon breed was entrusted to us by Tannin-ossan before our battle against the Church warriors — a [Spectre Dragon] egg. A [Spectre Dragon] had moved to the Underworld, but the Underworld's atmosphere was unsuitable to hatch its egg, so we placed it in this underground space below the town in the human world so that it could hatch. Since then, it was placed under the care of the members of [DxD] who were in Kuoh Town. Today it was my turn, but Asia also came along with me to watch. There was also another visitor here besides us, and upon seeing her, I laughed.

"I didn't expect that you would take care of this egg."

I was looking at Ophis who was hugging the egg tightly.

"I, have never raised children. Curious."

Correct, in addition to us who came here in turn every day, Ophis also came here every day. Because [egg], [hatching], and [dragon]

were important keywords, it had greatly piqued her interest. Ophis said that she had never seen a dragon hatching out of an egg despite living so long, so she wanted to take this opportunity to witness it. …Having said that, it felt like she was a parent as she held onto it tightly…. Seeing her adorable actions, I couldn't help laughing.

"Hehefufu—"

I don't know who or where she learnt it from, but Ophis was currently using a breathing technique for pregnant women…. Moreover, a human breathing technique that's for pregnant women is useless for an oviparous organism. Rather, they'll hatch out from eggs on their own! …Ravel and Raiser would be returning in two days from the custody of Ajuka Beelzebub-sama. It was said that they were safe, but due to Beelzebub-sama's own situation and time, there were a lot of things which needed his attention, which is why that day was chosen. …It might be something to do with politics. After all, why would Ravel and Raiser be involved with it….

"…"

In fact, this space actually had another visitor present. Sitting slightly further away, a man wearing a black coat was closely watching Ophis. It was truly unexpected, even the Evil Dragon Crom Cruach was in here! As long as he knew that Ophis was in here, he would rush over and closely observe every minute action that Ophis made. …It couldn't be said that he was an extremely Evil Dragon…but he was still quite scary. As it was difficult to speak with him much, we didn't have much to do besides trusting him. Although Tannin-ossan trusted him absolutely, it still wasn't so simple to get along with him… —While I was thinking about this, Asia walked towards him. She stood in front of Crom Cruach and said

"U-Umm, this, if you want, please eat it."

What Asia took out of her handbag was — a bunch of bananas. Ophis also always had bananas as a snack. Not only that, Asia had also talked to the four Evil Dragon brothers and Fafnir. Perhaps, in Asia's mind she had the enigmatic thought that [Dragon = Banana].

“This is called a banana. It tastes very good, you know?”

“…”

Crom Cruach silently received a banana from Asia. I was a little troubled over how to respond to that. After Asia gave him the banana, she bowed, and then came back over. Asia made a small smile as she said

“Sometimes I come here to check on how Ophis is doing.”

The relationship between Asia and Ophis was really good. Asia was able to deal with dragons really well…. Azazel-sensei often says that she has a lot of potential as a dragon tamer. —She said that dragons had something that she couldn’t explain.

“…Asia, what happened to Fafnir afterwards?”

I asked about Fafnir.

During the battle in Heaven, he was injured while he tried to protect Asia. The Dragon King who received extremely fierce attacks in order to protect Asia—. After the battle with Rizevim, Fafnir had been sleeping to recover. Although his wounds were treated by Asia…Asia had a sorrowful expression on her face as she shook her head.

“…I see.”

There was still no response, and even if Asia called him, there would still be no response. The severity of the injury exceeded what was originally expected. Asia told everyone that neither Fafnir’s physical strength nor consciousness had returned as there was no response from him…. Ophis suddenly said something.

“You don’t need to worry. —Fafnir is currently fighting[1][1][1].”

As if echoing her, Crom Cruach held the banana as he said with a serious look

“He is a Dragon King. He won’t fall so easily.”

““?””

Asia and I looked at each other; we were both somewhat puzzled by the words of these two dragons. At that time, it was almost noon.

“Well, it’s almost lunch time. Ophis, what are you planning to do?”

With a slightly pitiful expression, Ophis put down the egg and came over to where we were.

“I, will not miss a meal.”

Geez, she was unexpectedly greedy, this loli Dragon God-sama…. Well, we planned to head home, but what did that other dragon-sama plan to do?

“What do you plan to—”

Although I said that to him, he was already gone. Since he knew that Ophis was going back together with us, he quickly left…. But I didn’t expect that that guy, Crom Cruach would actually leave with the banana—.

## Part 2

Two days later, it was the weekend—. Today was the day that we would meet Ajuka Beelzebub-sama, the day that Ravel and Raiser would return. We were all ready, and we planned to use the transportation magic circle underneath my house to travel over to Beelzebub-sama’s location. In order to calm myself down, I went upstairs to the first floor to drink some water. While sitting on the sofa of the living room, tou-san polished his fishing rod as he said to me

“Hey, Ise. I plan to go fishing, why don’t we go together? Kaa-san will come along as well. Call Asia-chan to come together with us too.”

Tou-san smiled as he invited me. …Fishing, huh. Along with Asia, the four of us going together? …Hm, although it wasn’t bad, it was just

too unfortunate. If Asia and I went fishing in this situation, I would feel bad about everyone else. I apologetically rubbed the back of my head as I apologised to tou-san.

“Sorry, tou-san. …I’m rather busy right now. It’s because there is something very important to do right now. How about we go together next time?”

Hearing my reply, tou-san — his expression became slightly lonesome as he gave me a wry smile and said

“…I see. Although I do occasionally want to go fishing with my children, you are also high school students, and you have your own priorities.”

“Sorry.”

“What are you talking about, it’s alright. We’ll go together next time!”

Although tou-san replied to me like that…I couldn’t tell him the truth. Although it was rather painful, it was also in order to prevent my parents from danger that I said that. After tou-san said that, kaa-san came over to my side and whispered.

(For otou-san, he was really happy when he heard that you were going to start up your own company later, so he wanted to go fishing with you by the sea so that he could have an honest talk with you.)

—Well. …So that was it. Tou-san truly was happy. That was why he invited me to go fishing.

(…Ah — I see, but, it’ll have to be next time.)

After hearing me say that, kaa-san made a bitter smile and pat my back as she said

(Okay, let me accompany otou-san today. You can go and finish what you need to do.)

Kaa-san said that to me as she took the cup from my hand.

(But you know, Ise. Your otou-san, he wants to have a good conversation with you as a father. You can’t forget this, okay?)

…Have a good conversation with tou-san? I felt a little shy about a solemn conversation between just two people…. I was already a boy of this age, so having a conversation like that with tou-san seemed a little difficult…

(I understand.)

After saying that, I returned downstairs—.

It was time; the members of the Occult Research Club, the Sitris, Griselda-san and Azazel-sensei had gathered in the basement. Dulio was on guard duty in Heaven, and Ikuse Tobio was on a mission elsewhere so both of them couldn't come here. The Vali team didn't come either. Although we called Kuroka and Le Fay, it seemed like they were at Vali's side…

"……"

Recalling what my parents just said, I was slightly distracted. I obviously chose to pick Ravel up to return here, but I was rather concerned about what my parents said…

"What is it, Ise?"

Noticing that I seemed a bit strange, Azazel-sensei curiously asked me

"Ah, sorry, it's just something I'm a bit concerned about."

Perhaps knowing what it was, Rias said

"Did anything happen with your parents?"

As expected of Rias, she really understood me. Sensei exhaled, and then continued

"I was wondering what it was; so you had an argument with your parents? Letting strange things worry you right now will be troublesome. Say it out and you might be able to relax a bit."

Perhaps that could work. So I told everyone about what happened before.

"It's not a big deal. Although they wanted to go fishing, I declined. I

declined because there were other things to be done.”

After hearing what I said, sensei held his hand up to his chin, and then eloquently said

“…Fishing, huh. And together with his son.”

Sensei said to me with a serious expression

“Listen carefully, Ise. Although you can’t do it today, you should go fishing together next time.”

“Eh? Well, of course. That’s what I was planning to do…. What’s with you all of a sudden, sensei?”

Sensei rested his hand on top of my shoulder.

“Parents, they won’t stay by your side forever. Someday, they will leave you. So, while they’re still here, you should properly fulfil your responsibility as their child.”

“Ah, yes, I know…”

Rather abruptly, Akeno-san and I looked at each other — she returned a faint smile to me. …My parents won’t always be by my side? That is true; since I have both of my parents, perhaps it could be said that I’m one of the most blessed among everyone else. …I decided that as long as I had time, I would go fishing with tou-san. Occasionally, I also need to spend some quality time with my family! I once again made up my mind. Sensei looked at everyone as he said

“These words, you need to remember them as well Rias.”

“I understand them very well. But, isn’t it about time?”

In response to Rias who calmly answered, sensei sighed.

“Really, that’s why I say you young people…you should all get ready.”

Azazel-sensei released light from his hands, and the large transportation magic circle below our feet then glowed. The destination was Ajuka Beelzebub-sama’s location — that was the

only way that it could vaguely be explained. After a few seconds, we were surrounded by the light which was emitted from the magic circle, and then transported to our destination—.

## Part 3

TN: Where I have dialogue within brackets such as [“WHAT!?”], it is used to indicate the response of several people at once.

When the light disappeared, the place we arrived at was — a sandy beach. That’s right, no matter how one looked at it, it was a beach. The sky above…was very dark. It was night time. The sound of rustling waves echoed over the quiet beach. …In the Underworld, seas didn’t exist. It was difficult to say that it was a huge lake too…. But the sky looked somewhat different from the Underworld. So, it was the human world then…? While I was thinking about that, I saw ‘it’ hanging in the air. —It was something which closely resembled the moon, and there were two of them. In the human world, only one moon was visible in the night sky from Earth. So where was this place…? Everyone noticed that this place was neither the human world nor the Underworld, and began looking around everywhere.

“—This place is known as a field which is part of the reproduction of another dimension, [Another World].”

A voice was suddenly heard. Looking over at the direction where the voice came from — there was a man sitting on a chair on a certain side of the beach. It was a man with a bewitching atmosphere — Maou Ajuka Beelzebub-sama. Placed beside Beelzebub-sama was a bed. On top of it there seemed to be someone sleeping there. …The chair and bed which were sitting on the beach seemed rather out of place. Normally speaking, when coming to a beach, shouldn’t it be accompanied by a parasol and deck chairs? …The mysterious feeling really suited this Maou-sama’s unusual taste. Beelzebub-sama closed the book he was reading and greeted us.

“Long time no see, members of the Gremory household…no, right now, I should say the members of [DxD].”

Azazel-sensei took a step forwards first, and shook hands with Beelzebub-sama who had stood up.

“It’s been a long time since we last saw each other in the Underworld, Ajuka.”

Beelzebub-sama smiled as he shook hands.

“Being able to meet you like this without any other VIPs present is a first, Former Governor Azazel-dono.”

“Rather than me, did you prepare this beforehand as well?”

Sensei said that as he looked around at the beach. Beelzebub-sama smiled wryly and replied

“You could say that our meeting is rather dangerous for our factions, even if there are the members of [DxD] to intervene.”

After the two people of high stature met face to face, Rias brought up a question.

“Ajuka-sama, what about Raiser and Ravel?”

Beelzebub-sama looked towards the bed.

“Raiser Phoenix was just taken away by the Phoenix family who came a little earlier. But they thought that it would be more appropriate to entrust the ojou-san [121] to you. Ravel-san is over there.”

Looking over to the bed — Ravel was sleeping there peacefully. — Uh! I, and everyone else who couldn’t wait ran to her side.

“Ravel! Ravel!”

“Ravel!”

Koneko-chan and I both called Ravel’s name from the bedside. In order to reassure us, Beelzebub-sama said

“She’s just asleep right now.”

In response to our calls, Ravel spoke.

“…Nnn…Ise…sama? And Koneko-san…?”

Having just opened her eyes, Ravel noticed Koneko-chan and me!

“Uwuaaaaahhh!”

Seeing that Ravel was safe, Koneko-chan embraced Ravel as she cried. At this time, I was a little embarrassed to hug her… But I couldn’t stop my tears from welling up, seeing that Ravel was safe and sound! Looking around, everyone was at ease with their hands over their chest. …I see, not only Ravel, Raiser was also safe and returned home with the Phoenix family. Sensei added on a bit of information.

“In fact, my special agents — Slash Dog’s team, went to the Phoenix household as Raiser’s bodyguards. Nothing happened to them.”

So Ikuse-san’s mission was to be Raiser’s bodyguard. …However, to send the Grigori’s top special team as bodyguards, it seems like Raiser’s safety was rather important… It seemed to be related to the place that Ravel slept in. It was certain that the pair became involved in some sort of incident. After we confirmed that the Phoenix siblings were safe, Beelzebub-sama said to us

“Well, the reason for inviting you guys and the Former Governor over isn’t as simple as just telling you that this girl is safe and sound.”

Saying this, Beelzebub-sama took out from his pocket — a chess piece. …Speaking of Beelzebub-sama, I remembered that he was the creator of the [Evil Pieces]. This was something which was already known…but I hadn’t seen the shape of that piece before. It was unlike the [Pawn] or [Knight], and neither was it like the [Bishop], [Rook], or [Queen].

“Is there a connection to this chess piece? It doesn’t feel like just any other Evil Piece.”

That’s right, the aura which emanated from that piece — it was

certainly an Evil Piece. The reincarnated Devils and I who were present could feel it. Out from Beelzebub-sama‘s mouth came a shocking truth.

“—This is the [King] piece.”

[“—What!?”]

…How could it be? It was actually that!? Everyone who heard that was left stunned. That was to be expected! It was because what we had learnt until now about the Evil Pieces was that the [King] piece did not exist. From what we were taught, after becoming a high-class Devil, all we had to do was touch the [Monument] inside the Maou’s or various Lords’ castles and we would become a [King]. After that, we would be able to have our own peerage and a set of Evil Pieces. That was why they told us that the [King] piece did not exist… Although I mentioned before that everyone was startled by it, one person was an exception, and the person who remained absolutely calm was — Azazel-sensei.

“…Although I’ve heard of the rumours, this is really my first time seeing it.”

“…You already knew about it, sensei?”

After hearing my question, sensei put his hand on his chin.

“I said they were rumours. Originally, after signing the agreement with the Devils, I continued to search for the truth.”

No, no, I was just too surprised! Even as a high-class Devil and [King], Rias seemed to have a look of incredible disbelief as she looked at the piece which Beelzebub-sama was holding in his hand.

“…[King]…piece? How is it possible? The technology to produce the [King] piece hasn’t been developed right? Isn’t it said that simply completing the registration process to become [King] with the [Monument] is enough? That’s how the system is, right?”

Hearing what Rias said, Beelzebub-sama nodded.

“Well, the [King] piece originally didn’t exist. What you said just now

was originally the Evil Pieces system, and the registration process for becoming [King]…no, I can only say that's all there is to the registration system. But in order not to let the [King] piece be exposed in the current story which exists, when a servant Devil is promoted, the piece within their body fusing or overlapping with the [King] piece is judged to be a very dangerous thing."

Beelzebub-sama played with the piece in his hand as he continued

"The characteristic of this piece — is simply power enhancement. But, the strengthening isn't as weak as just two or three times. As long as one possesses this, it could be ten times, or even a strengthening of over a hundred times is possible. That literally means, power can be enhanced far more than normal. That's why the [King] piece was prohibited. The fear was that the people who had obtained this sort of power could have malicious intentions towards the government, and could harm the government. Excessive power will blind people's eyes."

…Pure strengthening. Strengthening of ten or even a hundred-fold was basically the same effect as Ophis's snakes wasn't it? Did the Old Maou Faction know about this? …I don't know, and even if they knew, I wonder if they used it. Why was the [King] piece made by the Maou then—. I don't think they hated the current Maous just because they used the [King] piece. I still remembered the Old Maou Faction who harboured such strong evil feelings. …Those guys obtained snakes after getting the support of Ophis, and then indulged themselves in power. If they were able to use the [King] piece, many high-class Devils and reincarnated Devils who could easily rise up would appear. …Diadora would definitely have lost himself with the power of the [King] piece if he had one. Prohibiting it was an understandable matter. Beelzebub-sama created a small magic circle next to his hand. After applying a small amount of energy to it, the details of dozens of people appeared on the beach. …I felt like they were all people that I had seen in video recordings and Rating Game magazines. Rias and Sona-zenkaichou also thought that they seemed familiar, and their expressions seemed confused. In this situation, Beelzebub-sama told us an even more shocking truth.

“The people shown here are all top ranked Rating Game contestants. What they have in common is that they’re all from the original 72 Pillars — pure-blooded high-class Devils. Furthermore, they — are all users of the [King] piece. This was the idea of the higher-ups in the Underworld. It hasn’t been publicly stated. As a result, the users of these pieces are known as ultimate-class Devils, and it wouldn’t be an overstatement to say that they’re even Maou-class.”

[“—What!?”]

…Everyone was left speechless. They were all too surprised by Beelzebub-sama’s words. After gasping, Sona-zenkaichou asked Beelzebub-sama

“…Well, the true power of those shown here in the top rankings is…?”

“Ah, them, the majority of them are using a power which can’t publicly be stated as ‘their own power’ to continuously climb the ranks. Most of the Game’s management executives are also people who are on their side. By retaining the [King] piece, using bribery to obtain the commercial rights, along with the ideas of the higher-ups, they conspire beforehand to manipulate their games. They’re constantly involved in unfair and dishonest competitions. Even so, there are people who have used their own power to become top ranking players. For example, people like the former Dragon King Tannin, and Rudiger Rosenkreutz. It’s a trend mainly seen with reincarnated Devils.”

…The unbelievable confession caused everyone to listen quietly. It was confirmed that the information which appeared there didn’t have anything to do with Tannin-ossan. Indeed, that ossan’s true power as an ultimate-class Devil was genuine. Beelzebub-sama shrugged.

“Well, it’s the same as competitions in the human world…the Rating Games in the Underworld have a similar flaw. I was just the initiator, and didn’t manage the actual system itself. There may even be other [Cannot be touched], and [Cannot be spoken] things which are being used. As the initiator, no matter what the era, simply taking a step away from producing things will cause things to get out of hand.”

After the Rating Game system was completed, most of the rights were transferred over to the current Game managers. I didn't expect it; Ajuka Beelzebub-sama obviously created the Game, but when the Rating Game combined the ideas of other people it could actually become so repulsive. I had also heard that for the creators of a work, when they mixed in the ideas of other people, it would feel very annoying.

"That is to say, although the competition is quite fierce, as long as one has true strength, anyone can obtain fame in the Rating Games. To the people in the higher-ups, it's not a sham…but the players who are able to break through the status quo are only the exceptionally special cases like you guys. For other people, it's an impossible task."

A half-baked awareness and ability would make it impossible to overcome the higher-ups who created this.

"The reason why the top ranked contestants don't have much change in rank is because…?"

Kiba, who often watched Rating Games continued to ask Beelzebub-sama

"—This kind of tug-of-war state is because there are perfect adjustments to balance it. It's just the old Devils who are secretly controlling things in order to reap the benefits. It's really just a competition for the for the old Devils' top ranked players so that they can generate a lot of money. As long as they're able to control the competition, the profits that they receive will simply increase. No matter how eye-catching a reincarnated Devil is, as long as they use the [King] piece, the challengers to the top ranked players who are controlled by those old Devils will undoubtedly face an unfair challenge."

Beelzebub-sama's words caused Sona-zenkaichou to fall to her knees on the spot.

"…How can this be…!?"

For Sona-zenkaichou, who planned to build a Rating Game school

that anyone could attend, this information was like a deadly poison to her… —The [King] piece. The top ranked players were in control of the rankings. It was a cruel fact.

“…All of this is a concealed truth. If the people knew about this, it would dramatically shake the values of the Underworld…”

Saji, who was supporting Sona-zenkaichou revealed an expression of anguish.

“…Sirzechs can’t do much about them either, right?”

Azazel-sensei asked Beelzebub-sama.

“For now, this is how it is. On the surface, it’s just a political front that they’re pretending to actively deal with, but if they act rashly, the balance of the Underworld will collapse. With the issues related to the survival of the race and internal strife on top of that, both the young and old are in a heated situation where everything could collapse in a single instant. Moreover, the opponents are the numerous cunning old Devils; for their own interests and the sake of their aristocratic society, they’ll do anything. To some extent, they’re even more troublesome than the Old Maou faction as they harbour an even deeper darkness than them. Even for Sirzechs and I who are known as Super Devils, we can only appear to push back and forth on the surface politically.”

The Rating Games were tied together with politics and economics…. Behind the scenes, those powerful Devils were manipulating the competition for their own interests. Right now, we found out about an incredible situation…I could no longer seriously look at a professional game! In the battle between the Gremory and Bael Houses, it could also have been considered a contest between the Maou faction and Great King faction behind the scenes, which was why a different type of contest could be displayed. The match itself was truly honest. It must have been due to Sirzechs-sama’s effort in making a deal in secret so that our match wouldn’t be manipulated. With a grim expression, Rias continued to ask Beelzebub-sama

“But, why are you telling us this information? Wasn’t this extremely confidential information something that only the higher-ups — and

Maou's knew about?"

Beelzebub-sama quietly closed his eyes.

"The person who shouldn't know about this, or perhaps I should say, the person who can't be allowed to know about this, does know about it. —That person is Emperor Diehauser Belial. He knows the truth about this."

—What! …The Emperor's name was actually mentioned here. And it seems he also knew about the truth of the Rating Games.

"Is Diehauser genuine?"

"Well, he is pure in his virtue as he used his own talent and ability to become the Champion of Devils. Without using the [King] piece, he was able to reach the very top. That's the reason behind the incident which occurred the other day. —Rizevim Livan Lucifer was able to successfully snatch Agreas[131] due to the assistance of the Emperor. It was all in order to pursue the truth of everything."

["—WHAT!?"]

…How could it be!? We were surprised once again by this information. That Emperor Belial, he would actually help Rizevim, and Qlippoth!?

The Champion actually took part in the incident where Agreas was stolen…. I seemed to have a faint clue about it. When we went to Auros Academy, the Champion had come over to visit us, and also spoke to the children. Afterwards, it seems he then went over to Agreas for filming…I see, at that time, the Champion had already defected and was together with Rizevim… —All along, we were being led towards that battle in Auros Academy, and it was singlehandedly set up by the Champion. …Damn it, I was angrier than I was surprised; that series of events simply began to confuse me. Rias was so shocked that even her shoulders began trembling.

"That Champion…actually participated in a terrorist attack…I can't believe it!"

"He defected precisely because he discovered the truth. You could

say that he thought it through, and didn't just do it impulsively."

Even Xenovia, who was always impulsive, seemed doubtful about the Champion's actions. Beelzebub-sama frowned.

"He has his own reasons. …If you search for the root cause, you could say that it's the fault of the old Devils. …The ways of thinking of those older Devils has gradually been distorting the standards of the Underworld. It finally reached the limit. And the Champion used this opportunity to take action."

The Champion's own reasons—. …With the reason that the Underworld, Devils, and every faction was his enemy, he really…. Because I had only met him a handful of times, I didn't think that he was a bad person. However, since I was just like a child who lacked much experience, perhaps I wasn't able to see that he was a bad person…. I was a little concerned about something, so I asked Beelzebub-sama

"Why did this happen to Raiser and Ravel…? Could it be that Emperor Belial was using it as a terrorist attack?"

Only now did I notice that the Champion dragged the Phoenix siblings into this. Beelzebub-sama replied to me

"In order to call me out. He only wanted to talk to me, and that's why he used them. During a match, when misconduct occurs, that's something I personally manage. In order to fulfil this condition, the misconduct occurred this time because the Champion used his ability against the system. His ability is called [Worthless]; it is the power to completely invalidate a special ability. He invalidated the retiring system of the Rating Game, which caused the emergency program to be initiated. …In order to confirm exactly why the Emperor did such a thing, I transported myself over there."

…So that was the truth behind the misconduct. The Emperor used his own ability to invalidate the Game's system, and as a result, Beelzebub-sama personally transported over there after becoming interested in the misconduct.

"Well, what did you talk about?"

In response to Azazel-sensei's question, Beelzebub-sama nodded.

"Yes, about the [King] piece and it was also made clear that he was cooperating with Rizevim. —But, simply for that, having the Phoenix siblings there was too dangerous."

"In the end, what happened?"

I asked Beelzebub-sama again, but the person who replied was Azazel-sensei.

"The Rating Game uses cameras for the audience, and cameras with other purposes such as surveillance. The camera used for surveillance is not only used by the management, but in some cases, the higher-ups are also able to view it. The conversation between Ajuka and the Champion was also seen by the higher-ups. The Phoenix siblings who were present at the time could also be suspected of having involvement. The reason for this is because, while Ajuka and the Emperor were talking about the [King] piece, it led to various other confidential matters being spoken about. If things aren't handled well, the two siblings will be disposed of."

"Disposed, how will…!"

Simply for being present there, Ravel would be disposed of? That was just far too unreasonable! Beelzebub-sama made a wry smile.

"That's what they'll do. In order to maintain their own position, those old guys would definitely do such a thing calmly. In the past, the people who have found out about the truth of the [King] piece have also been mercilessly disposed of by them. Afraid that it would come to that, the Emperor used the Phoenix siblings and then entrusted them to me. Even if it's those old guys, they wouldn't dare to act rashly against me."

…So that was the truth behind the cause for the events which occurred in the match between the Champion Belial and Raiser…. Beelzebub-sama continued

"Both of them were entrusted to me honestly. Before ensuring their safety with absolute certainty, I didn't release them. For young people like you with a bright future to actually be killed due to the

plots of those old guys, that's something I absolutely cannot agree with."

Although Raiser and Ravel were dragged into this confidential matter, they were able to remain safe, all because Beelzebub-sama did his best to protect them. …To us, this bewitching man stood at the highest point of the Underworld in a place that we couldn't even see. But, having saved the Phoenix siblings this time, he was a Maou-sama that was worthy of our trust. Thinking about it, I'm currently strong, and that's also thanks to him as he helped me adjust my pieces. After recovering herself, Sona-zenkaichou stood up, and narrowed her eyes.

"Ajuka-sama, what are the plans for the Champion now that he's no longer here?"

She asked a key question. Beelzebub-sama said

"—Everything that we just discussed will be announced to the entire Underworld and the various factions."

["—WHAT!?"]

After hearing the Champion's purpose from Beelzebub-sama, everyone was given quite a shock. …It was the same as what Saji said, if everyone found out about this, the Underworld's values would be damaged. And there were also the hopes and dreams of middle and low-class Devils for the Rating Games—. …The inside was truly dark; if everyone knew about the manipulation of rankings, the people who worked hard for their dreams and the children who were filled with dreams of the future would have their hopes crushed. Being ranked first, the absolute Champion; the truth which came out of Emperor Belial's would weigh heavier than anything else. With a bitter expression and teary face, Sona-zenkaichou said

"…Perhaps that will come at the expense of even more victims than the past."

The battle for Agreas, and the battle after the attack in Heaven had already resulted in many casualties. The Emperor's purpose looked like it was only going to cause even more casualties this time. That's

because the people who found out about the truth would rally together and riot. Beelzebub-sama sighed.

“…There will be a considerable number of sacrifices. Especially because the incident this time is quite radical. Together with the Agreas battle, the things which have been lost are things which cannot be ignored.”

“So where is the Champion now?”

Rias asked. What needed to be said had been said, what needed to be asked had been asked; so where did the Champion go?

“He forcibly transferred away. He must have used Rizevim’s power, or perhaps he used the power of that Evil Dragon who’s renowned for his magic, Aži Dahāka. He thought that if he stayed too long with me, it would be dangerous.”

Beelzebub-sama replied. However, my doubts still continued.

“…But, why did that only happen with Raiser’s match? Would it not have worked if it was against other opponents…?”

Towards my question, Beelzebub-sama gently laughed.

“You will soon know the answer to that question. He is unexpectedly wise.”

…? I didn’t quite understand. Did he have a reason for using Raiser or not? Azazel-sensei cleared his throat and said

“However, Ajuka. Since the video from the surveillance camera could be seen, then that means those old Devils would have heard your conversation with Emperor Belial. They might come over to question your negligence.”

“To some extent, what happened in that video has been tampered with. Right now, those old guys will be making the wrong move…”

Sensei shrugged.

“I see. Even if the Champion did something, then there’ll be a reasonable response. Given that it’s you, you definitely would’ve

made preparations.”

“That is the case for now. I am a Maou after all. It’s also something that Sirzechs can’t do, something that only I can do.”

“I see, you’re quite correct. —But even if a lot of things happen, we need to keep the number of casualties to a minimum.”

“Well, of course I understand that. I definitely won’t allow any of the civilians who are innocent to become victims.”

Azazel-sensei and Beelzebub-sama were able to speak to each other congenially. We couldn’t help thinking that these two people were indeed VIPs, and were truly worthy of being the leaders of their race.

“Thank you again for the matter involving Ravel and Raiser, Ajuka.”

“Of course I’d do something of that level, Former Governor-dono. It’s quite rare for young people with such bright futures to appear, so how could I possibly let them die like that? The current Rating Game situation is a result my laissez-faire[141] attitude. If possible, I want to purify the elements of the Game environment that I can. Raiser Phoenix as well as you young Devils could be the ones with the vital talent which is required to change the Rating Games.”

I took a step forward and bowed my head.

“…I don’t understand the complicated issues, but I completely trust Azazel-sensei and the Maou-samas when it comes to the political aspect of things. But, please let me thank you. I am truly grateful that you were able to help Ravel and Raiser!”

It was a candid thought. Originally, the politics of the Rating Games and its darkness were too distant from us. But the person who saved Ravel was this man, so I thanked him for that.

“…Thank you.”

“Ah, thank you!”

Koneko-chan stood beside me and also thanked him as she bowed her head. Gasper also copied us. For the both of them, since their

friend was rescued, they expressed their thankfulness to Maou-sama. The members of [DxD] who were present also bowed in gratitude. A smile emerged on Beelzebub-sama's face.

"Well, you young Devils will face many troubles, but, please overcome them. The circumstances above you have the people above you to deal with them. Afterwards, no matter what happens, you should enthusiastically show your spirit, and protect the things that you should protect!"

Those were concise words! Ah, anyone who strikes out at us will definitely be repaid a hundred-fold. Anything that needs to be protected will be protected with all our strength. That was us. That wasn't just something that we had been doing, but also that we'll continue to do in the future. —While I was thinking like that, Azazel-sensei raised his index finger and asked Beelzebub-sama

"Tell me one thing. —How many [King] pieces currently exist?"

"The production was already stopped during the initial development stage. No one even knows the production method, and only I made them, so it's not possible for new pieces to be made. To sum it up, only the few that I made during initial production exist. I've kept track of all of them; aside from the few that I have, there are nine in total. The Emperor gave his one to me. I now currently have four."

I didn't realise when, but Beelzebub-sama produced a second [King] piece in his hand. I was afraid that that was the piece which he obtained from the Emperor. After hearing this response, sensei had a grim look.

"…There are five which remain in the hands of higher-up Devils. It's surprisingly many. If worst come to worst, it'll be enough for a rebellion."

…The Devils who used those pieces were able to rival ultimate-class Devils, and even Maou-class Devils. As for the rest of the five Devils, sensei didn't know what they would bring about.

"I plan to spend a few thousand years reclaiming them. This is the responsibility that I should fulfil as the creator."

The piece that he obtained from the Emperor could possibly be called reclaiming. If it was someone other than this man who obtained it, it was possible that they would do something unimaginably evil. In fact, it really is good that the Emperor's piece was not taken by Rizevim…. Or would it have been useless to Rizevim? Perhaps sensing my thoughts, the Maou-sama said

"If the [King] piece is used by someone who is already too strong, or if it is used by someone who has a special ability, an overload may occur. In the worst case, it would endanger their lives. Even if they were saved…it wouldn't be any better."

So such a reason existed. It wasn't something that could be used by the people who already possessed power. Perhaps that's the reason why the Old Maou faction didn't use it? If Rizevim used it, it was possible that he could die, so that's why he didn't use it…? There were still many questions which were left unanswered. Beelzebub-sama said to Azazel-sensei

"There is also something else, Former Governor Azazel-dono."

"What is it?"

"It'll be best if you can realise it. To be honest, if I were the enemy, in order to bring down [DxD], you would be the first person I'd target."

—Mn. …No one expected such a statement from Beelzebub-sama, and everyone focused their attention towards those two people. Beelzebub-sama continued

"You are far too talented. Not only to this team, even for the various factions, you're an outstanding consultant. The next time Indra and Hades aim for something, it will be you…I hope you realise that."

Sensei shrugged as he smiled wryly.

"…That's the same as what that God of Destruction said. …But, I've more or less prepared some self-protection measures."

…Target sensei huh. Sensei was our benefactor who had guided us. And as a bridge for the various factions, he was involved in VIP talks several times. Looking at the current state of things, the reason why

the [DxD] team existed was also thanks to sensei. That was why sensei's ability was a very important existence to both us, and the VIPs of the various factions. …That was why he would become a target for people. Please sensei; don't let anything happen to you in the future. If you fall, the future will become uncertain…well, sensei isn't someone who'd die easily though. But Beelzebub-sama's advice was terrifying enough. Conversely, Azazel-sensei asked Beelzebub-sama

"I heard that you also plunged into some strange things? —You know the whereabouts of [Innovate Clear] and [Telos Karma] right? You did that with your own [Team]…it has something to do with this space, doesn't it?"

All of a sudden, Azazel-sensei listed the names of two Longinus…. What was it? Although I knew that Beelzebub-sama operated his own [Team] somewhere in Japan…what do two of the Longinus have to do with this space? Beelzebub-sama shook his head.

"I'm very sorry, but this is my field. Even if it's you who's familiar with Sacred Gears, you may not be able to understand. If you want to know why, it's because it exists outside of the world."

Sensei regretfully sighed as he said 'I see'. At this time, a small magic circle for communication appeared beside Beelzebub-sama's ear. Beelzebub-sama listened to the voice.

"…A hotline, huh."

Beelzebub-sama eloquently narrowed his eyes.

"…Ho, to some extent it's an unexpected move from them, but it's also a bad move."

He turned around and said to us

"You should return immediately."

"What happened?"

Rias asked about the sudden occurrence, and a shocking piece of news came from the Maou-sama's mouth.

“—Ophis was attacked by an Evil Dragon.”

[“—WHAT!?”]

I and everyone else were speechless— The malice of those guys was in action once again.

## Part 4

Upstairs in the Hyoudou household—. Gathered in Ophis’s room were the members from before, and also Dulio who rushed over afterwards. Having been brought back, Ravel returned to her own room to rest. Koneko-chan also accompanied her. However, Ophis was lying on her bed…with her clothes ripped and tattered. Asia was currently healing her. The external injuries gradually faded until they disappeared. …When we hurriedly returned over from Beelzebub-sama’s side, Ophis had already been brutally injured. Her limbs had all been shattered, and her face was very heavily injured as well. Her entire body was covered with wounds caused by claws, and she had lost consciousness. Even after receiving treatment, she had not regained consciousness. …If she was still infinite, these kinds of injuries wouldn’t matter at all. But, she was currently finite. Even if she was stronger than any one person in this room, she could still be injured. …But, who was it? I couldn’t think of anyone that could defeat Ophis. And where was she attacked? As these doubts filled my mind, Dulio said

“…It looks like she was attacked in that underground space. At the time, I had a sense of anxiety, and quickly rushed over there. At that time, the Evil Dragon had already escaped. The one who arrived there before me was Crom Cruach.”

“……”

In the direction that Dulio pointed towards, Crom Cruach stood there as he leaned against the wall. Dulio then said

“Ophis, she…in order to protect the [Spectre Dragon] egg, she was beaten.”

……. …In other words, Ophis was hurt like this so that she could protect the egg… …Ah, those bastards, they must have deliberately been aiming for that egg. Since it was Ophis, she definitely would have sacrificed her life to protect that egg. If the aim of those bastards was to defeat Ophis, then they certainly would have aimed for the egg to attack her. Supposing that Ophis was protecting the egg, even Evil Dragons would be able to defeat her. But she didn’t do anything, or perhaps they used a technique that Ophis was defenceless against…? In any case, they injured Ophis to such an extent while she was defenceless. They really were a group of evil bastards…damn it!

“…Uhh. …Ophis.”

I was so angry that my entire body was pulsating. …She was clearly living a peaceful life. She was living together with us peacefully every day. She was really interested in the [Spectre Dragon] egg, and wanted to guard it. She just wanted to live an ordinary life! An aura of rage seeped out of my body. Beside me, Rias and Asia tried to comfort me.

“…Ise-san.”

“Ise, calm down. You’ll just be doing what they want if you don’t maintain your composure. All of us can also understand your anger. I, as well as everyone else am undeniably angry.”

“…I know, everything is because of that guy…it’s all part of that bastard’s plan…damn it!”

—Rizevim, Qlippoth! Indeed, it’s only that guy that I have to…! I restrained the anger in my body, and calmed my mind. At that time, a small communication magic circle appeared beside sensei’s ear.

“What is it, what happened?”

Turning my attention towards sensei, I saw that he was unable to utter a word, and he had a mortified expression.

“—Shit! …How did it come to that? Those bastards, they actually went and did something like that…!”

After thumping his chest a few times, sensei adjusted his breathing and said to me

“Ise, listen to me calmly. Do you understand? You absolutely have to listen to me calmly.”

“What actually happened, sensei? What is it?”

“—Your parents, they were just kidnapped by Qlippoth.”

The instant I heard that, I felt something erupt within me.

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**Notes**

1. That is to say, Fafnir is currently fighting the injury both physically and mentally.

2. An ojou-san is a high-class lady.

3. Agreas is the floating island which was where the Evil Pieces were manufactured. Refer to the events of volume 17 for more information.

4. A laissez-faire attitude is one where a leader does not restrict freedom and could be called laid back.

# To be infuriated

The members of [DxD] were gathered in the VIP room on the top floor of the Hyoudou household. Having moved from Ophis's room to this room, I — Kiba Yuuto, and my nakama were looking at the multiple monitors which were inside the VIP room, checking a certain video recording. —It was the video recording of what happened in that space. Because it was the precious egg that the former Dragon King Tannin entrusted us with, it was always monitored in preparation for any unforeseen circumstances. It was also a rare breed, so there was also a desire to record the moment that it hatched. That was the reason why there were surveillance cameras set up in the underground space. The footage that had been recorded by these numerous cameras was currently being watched by us. …What the recording showed, was a single Evil Dragon that had suddenly appeared in the underground space with Ophis, who then confronted it. After that…she was subjected to unimaginably brutal violence. …It was a scene of extreme cruelty. People couldn't help looking away from it. The Evil Dragon's tyrannical actions were excessively brutal. …With black scales and a khaki coloured belly, it was a slender snake-like Evil Dragon. Based on the image in the video, it had a large body which was around twenty metres long. Although it was snake-like in appearance, it had four limbs, and also four wings. It was uncertain whether the fluid which eerily drooled out of its giant mouth was saliva or venom. Together with its petrifying smile, it was a horribly ugly sight. Seeing this, I recalled that I might have seen it before; Rossweisse-san held her mouth with an expression of disgust as she said

"[Abyss Rage Dragon][1] — Níðhöggr[2] is a legendary Evil Dragon that has been living in Northern Europe. Even after being punished, it is a very problematic Evil Dragon that eventually revives. Because its vindictiveness is so deep, even when Ragnarök[3] comes — at the end of the world, it will survive and remain. …According to the records, the last time that it was defeated was several hundred years ago. Whether it resurrected on its own, or through the Holy Grail is unknown."

Níðhöggr, huh. I had also read about that legend. In the icy region of Niflheim in the Norse world, that was where Níðhöggr lived. It was a dragon that was full of greed. Because it often felt hungry, it swallowed everything that it laid its eyes upon. That Níðhöggr continuously attacked Ophis violently while she showed no resistance. It used its front paws to kick Ophis several times, stomp on Ophis several times, and even used its gigantic mouth to bite Ophis. Why didn't Ophis show any resistance against it at all? The reason was in Níðhöggr's left paw. —Ise-kun's unconscious parents were being held by Níðhöggr's claws. With a bitter expression, Azazel-sensei said

"…That bastard, it abducted Ise's parents beforehand, and then went to where Ophis was. Although we don't know what it said, it most certainly treated Ise's parents as hostages…."

Indeed, looking at that video recording, when the Evil Dragon suddenly appeared in the underground space and confronted Ophis, it had said something to her. Níðhöggr held Ise's parents that it had captured in front of Ophis, and Ophis then released her fighting stance. She surrendered herself to the ruthless violence of the Evil Dragon.

"…It's also staring at the egg. How despicable…!"

Both Rias-zenbuchou and Sona-zenkaichou quivered in anger as they watched the video recording. In the video, Níðhöggr feinted attacks against the egg several times, and Ophis would then stand in front of the egg to protect it. At that time — that Evil Dragon would ferociously and repeatedly assault Ophis. Seeing the Dragon God with such strong determination, everyone began to shed tears of remorse. She was a friend of Ise-kun. It was undeniably because her friend's parents were used as hostages that she must have thought 'if his parent's die, my friend will be sad'. It was also because of her interest in the [Spectre Dragon] egg that she cared for and had become attached to. —However, this was all used against her by that vicious Evil Dragon. Even for Ophis, although she once possessed immense power, she was currently limited; without the strength to withstand those attacks, it was inevitable that she would be defeated.

“…But, how did the Evil Dragon infiltrate that place?”

Griselda-san calmly asked. Set up all around Kuoh Town were powerful barriers. That underground space was within those barriers so it wouldn’t be very easy to simply break into it. …Having said that, in the past, there have been cases of barriers which were forcibly broken through, or hostile people who waited on the outside of the barrier. I was afraid that this time, both of those things might have happened. Besides forcibly breaking through that barrier, they had also kidnapped Ise-kun’s parents who had travelled outside of the barrier. It was said that when Ise-kun’s parents went out to go fishing, they had special agents who were secretly guarding them, but they were gotten rid of when the incident occurred.

Sensei answered

“…Lilith. It could be using some sort of link or connection between her and Ophis since she is a spawn of Ophis. Anyway, that side has Ophis’s spawn…when push comes to shove, they’ll incite her to do what they need. Right now, we’re analysing how they broke through the barrier…really, although I shouldn’t say this as the designer, it truly is such a useless barrier…!”

With a look of regret, sensei closed his eyes and grabbed his hair.

“In the middle of that, Níðhöggr sensed the presence of Crom Cruach who had transported over there, and immediately fled. Perhaps Crom Cruach having contact with Ophis, and Crom Cruach showing up there were both things which it had not expected.”

It was just as sensei said. In the video recording, after Crom Cruach appeared over there, the situation immediately changed. Níðhöggr was astonished the instant that it saw Crom Cruach. Seeing its panicked expression, it seemed like it didn’t expect Crom Cruach to show up there at all. In the video recording, Crom Cruach had noticed the change in Ophis, but by the time that he looked back towards Níðhöggr, that Evil Dragon had already begun to transport itself away. The last scene in the recording showed Crom Cruach moving closer to Ophis, and Dulio appearing. Subsequently, Dulio carried the injured Ophis to this room in the Hyoudou household. However, this news was known by Beelzebub-sama’s intelligence

network that had learned of it even before Azazel-sensei. That was the whole story of how Ophis was attacked.

“……”

Ise-kun continuously watched the video recording with a blank expression, and even when the video ended, he remained silent.

Entirely understanding the situation, Ise-kun — was silently overflowing with a red aura. He was continuously releasing a pressure which was different to before. The incredible force of the pressure caused everyone to become afraid of uttering a single word; they could only watch as they swallowed their saliva. His precious parents had been taken away, and were then treated as hostages. Ophis, who he always took good care of and protected, had also been severely injured. —It was an area that absolutely should not be touched; it was something that could be called a sanctuary. Seeing the Ise-kun before my eyes, I thought deeply. Qlippoth — Rizevim Livan Lucifer trampled over that sanctuary without any restraint. —He had triggered the wrath of a dragon. If the rage of a Heavenly Dragon was unleashed, what would happen? And what kind of outcome would it give that person? Ise-kun — with an empty look in his eyes said

“……So that’s how it is, Vali. I can finally understand your thoughts and feelings from the bottom of my heart.”

Suddenly, Ise-kun turned his gaze towards Crom Cruach.

“…Crom Cruach, why didn’t you get there sooner…”

“I only went over to that place for the sake of observing Ophis.”

Ise-kun listened to his succinct reply, and then approached him directly, grabbing his chest.

“…You, weren’t you always keeping an eye on Ophis? Didn’t you want to learn what a dragon was from Ophis…!? Well, why, why did such a thing happen…!”

“……”

Towards Ise-kun's question, the Evil Dragon didn't answer. Rias-zenbuchou inserted herself in between the two of them, causing them to separate.

"Please stop, Ise. Even if you try to pursue him for that now, it won't change anything."

Rias-zenbuchou allowed Ise-kun to calm down a bit, but Ise-kun's aura was still bursting out of him as he yelled

"…I know that! I know all that! But, but…! Damn it! Tou-san, kaa-san are…! That bastard…! That bastard Rizevim…!"

Due to Ise-kun's anger, he had begun to lose himself. We could also understand his feelings. Most of the people here had been under the care of Ise-kun's parents, and lived together with Ophis. By putting their lives in danger, it certainly provoked our anger. Even I…also felt intense anger! —But, continuing this would result in nothing. Absolutely nothing. If things continued like this, Ise-kun — he would become the same as I was before. Being driven by revenge, completely disregarding what's important, and ignoring the feelings of those important to him. I grabbed Ise-kun's shoulder and said

"Calm down, Ise-kun."

Ise-kun brushed my hand away, and drew near me. With a face full of rage, he grabbed my chest.

"…You, are you also telling me to calm down…? When Ophis has been assaulted like this, and when even my parents have been taken away…!?"

"That is exactly why you need to be calm. This is obviously the enemy's trap. Not only the hostages, but Ophis as well, it's to make you lose your cool. If you keep on going like this, you'll only allow the enemy to succeed."

Ise-kun continued to hold onto me, and lowered his head.

"—Those bastards, I'll never forgive them."

…Really, being like this isn't going to help. I turned the situation

around and grabbed Ise-kun, then pushed him against the wall of the room. Facing him, I declared

“…I can’t replace you. Rias Gremory’s [Pawn] can only be you. That’s why I cannot replace you. That’s because my most important friend said this to me — you are Rias Gremory’s [Knight]. That is why I will be a [Knight] to the end.”

That was — the past, before the battle against the rebel Church warriors; the words that Ise-kun said to me when I had lost my composure. I returned these words to him. Realising this point, Ise-kun was surprised, and then he made a wry smile.

“…The things of that time, you returned it to me.”

“I won’t tell you not to get angry. But please return to your usual self. If you forget the words which were originally your own, you definitely won’t be able to bring out your own true strength. Hyoudou Issei’s true value, is that he restrains the anger within himself, doesn’t allow his field of vision to narrow, and is able to find openings in his opponents.”

That’s right, you’ve always faced opponents who were above you; even if your own strength is known by your opponent, you would still aim for their openings. Hyoudou Issei always faces his opponents head on, and always chases his opponent’s weaknesses with the ultimate attack and defence. —If you lose your way, that’ll only be doing as your opponent wants. Not wanting to see him become like that, I had to stop him.

“Also, it’s not just you who’s feeling sadness for your parents.”

I turned my gaze towards Asia. Ise-kun also followed my gaze.

Standing there was a girl who had been crying ceaselessly.

“…Asia.”

Seeing the crying Asia, Ise-kun’s eyes finally seemed to have regained a bit of their usual colour. Asia sobbed as she recounted

“…For me, they’re the otou-san and okaa-san that weren’t easy for

me to get. Ise-san, I also…”

Asia broke into tears. For someone without a single relative like her, it certainly wasn’t easy for her to obtain ‘family’ in this world. She had obtained people whom she could call haha and chichi[141]. —It wasn’t only Ise-kun who felt pain and sadness when his parents were taken away. Seeing Asia like this, Ise-kun shook his head and covered his face with his hand.

“…About what I said. I’m sorry, Asia. I’m sorry, everyone…”

It seemed like he had finally regained his composure. Ise-kun turned around and said to me

“—Kiba, it’s good to have you.”

That was my line. You’ve helped me more than a few times. That thing doesn’t even count as anything significant. It’s just returning one small favour of the many that I owe you. When Ise-kun had calmed down, someone knocked on the door. Going over to see who it was, we found that it was actually Kuroka and Le Fay-san.

“Ara, were you busy nya~?”

“Ah, hello everyone.”

After their simple greeting, Azazel-sensei asked the two of them.

“Kuroka, Le Fay, where did you guys go? Although I heard that you were together with Vali…”

Kuroka didn’t wait for sensei to finish and interjected

“Well, we were together just then. From there, after we got hold of some important information, we hurried back over as soon as we could nya~”

Kuroka looked at all of us and said

“—We’ve roughly confirmed the location of those guys’ hideout, Agreas.”

[“—What!?”]

Everyone was shocked to hear this information! Qlippoth's base was in the floating city of Agreas! That place had finally been found—. After sensei heard this report, he couldn't help laughing.

"What good timing, Kuroka. As the saying goes, 'having borrowed, one must return'. It's our turn to take action!"

That was right. We wouldn't let ourselves be bullied by them in silence. Starting from that, we began the meeting to discuss our battle strategy for the operation which would take place in Agreas—.

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**Notes**

1. The hiragana is Abyss Rage Dragon; the kanji is Extrajudicial Death Dragon.

2. Níðhöggr is a dragon who lives under a root of the World Tree, Yggdrasil, and is in the world of the dead, Niflheim. Níðhöggr feeds on dead corpses and gnaws on a root of Yggdrasil until Ragnarök. It originates from Norse mythology.

3. Also known as the Twilight of the Gods, Ragnarök is a series of future events which is essentially the end of the world, after which it will be recreated by the survivors.

4. The words haha and chichi mean mother and father respectively.

# Life.3
# Hyoudou Issei

## Part I

The strategy plan for the Agreas battle operation was left to strategists like Azazel-sensei and Sona-zenkaichou to formulate. I —Hyoudou Issei returned to my own room, and began making preparations for the battle. Just then, a photo on the desk caught my attention. It was a photo of me, my parents, and Asia. It was taken last year in front of our house when Asia moved in with us. I —leaned my head against the wall, and then slowly sank down. …If I had gone fishing together with them, that wouldn't have happened, right? No, that would've resulted in a situation in which I wouldn't have been able to meet Ravel…but, at the least I needed to say something to my parents! Yes, why didn't I consider such a situation? Precisely because the enemy is that kind of a dangerous bastard, it's no surprise that my parents would be targeted! Somewhere in my mind, I kept on imagining that my parents were very ordinary people of this world who were not related to the supernatural. I believed that even if I reincarnated as a Devil, they would still be able to live an ordinary life in the human world. —The goal of that group of bastards was that, completely trampling over everything I thought of. …While I had no words to say, in my heart, I thought…I hope that tou-san and kaa-san are safe. My anger towards those bastards was endless, I wouldn't forgive them. —I will definitely bring those two back. While I made such a resolve,

someone knocked on the door. The person who walked in was — Ravel.

“Ise-sama…”

Having walked into the room, Ravel looked at me with a worried expression.

“What is it, Ravel? Don’t you need to rest?”

I smiled as I looked at her, but her face was still clouded with unhappiness.

“Well, it’s already fine. Compared to that…I really made you worry. And I wasn’t by your side when you had your career consultation…I was useless in all the crucial moments, as your manager I’m too ashamed…”

“It doesn’t matter. It’s enough that Ravel is safe.”

“B-But…I couldn’t do anything at all during all the critical moments…! During the [Devil Uprising], the unrest in Romania, that time with Auros, and even this time…! I’m supposed to be your manager, yet I can’t stay by Ise-sama’s side…. If that hadn’t happened to me, Ise-sama’s parents wouldn’t have…”

Ravel poignantly cried. Although she covered her face with her hands, streams of tears still flowed down her face through her hands. …So she was actually concerned about such a thing. She had clearly been helping me all along, but Ravel kept on thinking that she couldn’t accompany me in those crucial situations. I — quietly approached her, and then hugged her tightly.

“You’re wrong about that, Ravel. Precisely because I had Ravel waiting for me, I was able to face the enemy and fight with confidence, you know? So, don’t cry.”

“……I will always, always accompany Ise-sama by his side. Regardless of whether it’s a hundred years, a thousand years, or even the more distant future—”

“Thank you. Since you’ve said that, Ravel, I’m not going to die.”

I hugged my cute manager even more tightly, and I vowed

“—Definitely, we’ll come back to live with everyone.”

“…Yes!”

I felt that being able to hold Ravel, who was safe in my arms, was really nice. Yeah, I definitely can’t die. Nor will I let anyone else die. —Tou-san, kaa-san, I’ll definitely come to save you!

The battle strategy meeting had concluded, and it had been only been about half a day since Kuroka had passed that information on to us. The members of [DxD] were all gathered in the room underneath the Hyoudou household where a gigantic transportation magic circle had been drawn. The members included the Gremorys, Sitris, Irina, Griselda-san, and Dulio of the [Brave Saints], Slash Dog’s Ikuse-san, Kuroka and Le Fay. This time’s battle would be — a surprise. At this stage, the enemy still believed that we were looking for the location of Agreas and had yet to ascertain it. If we didn’t make any miscalculations, it would result in an unexpected attack for Qlippoth that would be outside their expectations. For us, this was the pre-emptive strike. It was Vali’s tenacity which finally led to the discovery of the wherabouts of Agreas. Otherwise, the floating city which had been transported there and could move wouldn’t have been so easy to find. …Thinking about it, that guy wouldn’t be together with us; he was probably going in alone to find out where Rizevim was hiding. Sairaorg-san and Seekvaira-san who weren’t present here were on standby in the Underworld in case anything happened. However, if it was a suitable time, they would also join up with us to fight. This time, right after we would be transported through the magic circle, we would immediately begin the battle in the city of Agreas. Azazel-sensei looked at us as he said

“Kuroka told me the approximate coordinates of where Agreas has stopped. —Ajuka will also help in transporting us over there. But his transportation magic can be considered as a special type, so the number of people that he can transfer at a time is limited. But, without his magic, it won’t be possible to break through the barrier to transport us to Agreas.”

I also noticed that the magic circle on the ground looked different to the ones in the past. So it was Beelzebub-sama using his magic to control it. Although he wasn't here in person, he was able to control the magic circle from a distance. He was even using an especially powerful type of transportation magic…but, without doing at least this, it wouldn't be possible to attack Qlippoth's base. Sensei continued

"The first team — is a diversionary unit."

Sona-zenkaichou and the Sitri peerage took a step forward.

"That will be done by us Sitris. We'll definitely get the enemy's attention and then create an opening."

"I will also go."

First it would be the Sitri household, Dulio, and Sister Griselda (+ several [Brave Saints] members) who would enter the city and cause confusion. That would be in order to draw the enemy's attention—. Sensei turned towards Rias.

"The second team will be the main force. Rias, Ise, and the members of the Occult Research Club."

That's right, we would be the main force. After we transported over to Agreas, I would rescue my parents, and we would also weaken Qlippoth's forces as much as we could. Rias nodded.

"Yes, I understand. After all, I am going to be taking care of ogifu-sama and ogibo-sama ' ' '. The people who are their own family members should go to save them."

Everyone in the Occult Research Club nodded in agreement.

"And then Tobio, you'll go together with Rias' group. As soon as you arrive, immediately begin supporting them from the shadows on your own. —As for me, I'll be going over after you guys. I'll head into the power generation rooms inside Agreas. If I'm able to stop it, then I'll stop it."

Azazel-sensei also planned to charge into that place. Yes, if he could

stop Agreas, it would be best to do so. We couldn't allow that sacred Rating Game location to continue to be exploited. That was the place where Sairaorg-san and I had once fought each other—. Sensei turned around to ask Le Fay

"Le Fay, what about that guy Vali?"

"He and the other members are on standby near Agreas. If you don't move carefully, Agreas and Vali-sama's osofu-sama[121] may escape."

Vali and Bikou were currently keeping an eye on it. Kuroka began to giggle.

"Since you're going to attack, you plan to get rid of them in a single assault rather quickly right? For Vali, it wasn't easy for him to finally catch the enemy's tail, so he definitely won't let them get away again nya~"

So he had prepared his determination to such a degree huh. However, we also had the element of surprise, so it would be a good opportunity. I as well, since I was going there, I could settle things with those bastards. But sensei seemed to have a slightly doubtful look, as he held his chin with one hand.

"Thanks to Vali's persistence, we found their hideout…saying that isn't wrong. However, Rizevim's actions have been too conspicuous this time. While the act of targeting Ophis and kidnapping Ise's parents isn't a bad move, it seems too impatient for a conspirator like that bastard. It feels like he's very anxious. Or did he want us to think this way and make such calculations…?"

I didn't quite understand what sensei was thinking about… Since sensei noticed that everyone's attention was focused on him, he refreshed himself and warned us

"Anyway, you all have to be careful. That bastard isn't just any ordinary guy. We don't know what sort of things he'll pull. You need to pay attention to every step. Even in the worst scenario, we need to rescue Ise's parents out of there!"

"Yes!"

We earnestly replied in unison. Sensei then made a bold smile and said to us

“But, remember this point well. —Those bastards have entered the sanctuary that they shouldn’t have entered. They’re a group of bastards who deserve to die. We absolutely cannot forgive them. If you’re able to defeat them, then turn them into dust. I’ll allow it.”

“Yes!”

That was obvious! Since they’ve attacked us, we’ll retaliate just as hard! —Vali, if you were going to come, couldn’t you have come earlier? I could drop everything just to destroy those bastards! While I was becoming more and more determined, the first team consisting of the Sitri household and others began their preparations to be transported—. The surprise battle on Agreas had begun!

## Part 2

When we arrived, the sound of explosions could be heard everywhere. Accompanied by the loud sounds of explosions, the ground was also shaking violently.

The location that we arrived at was the west side of the city’s central plaza. Nearby there was a vast park, with many trees planted there. Looking up, several clouds of smoke could be seen in the distance. It seems like the Sitri household, Dulio, and the others who arrived just before us were going wild. Arriving together with us was Slash Dog’s Ikuse-san. He and the black dog — Jin moved forward together.

“Sorry, but I need to do my own job. —I wish the rest of you good luck. Hyoudou Issei-kun, you absolutely must rescue your parents.”

“I will!”

Having confirmed my answer, Ikuse-san and Jin swiftly left the scene

without even the slightest noise. After all, he had received instructions from Azazel-sensei to do support work in secret.

“Let’s go!”

Under the command of Rias, while in the floating city of Agreas that Rizevim was on, we advanced towards the Government Office. It was in the northwest corner after exiting the park. Familiar with the location, Rias lead, and we followed after her. We didn’t fly in the air since we wanted to avoid being seen. Looking up at the sky, we could see countless number of mass-produced Evil Dragons flying towards the diversionary unit. …This was indeed the base of Qlippoth; there were an unimaginable number of them. Moving through the park, we stayed under the shadow of buildings to advance without drawing any attention to ourselves. After several minutes—. We arrived in front of the high-rise building. It was a building with a very unique design. It was Agreas’ Government Office. We stayed under the shadow of a building that was a short distance away from the Government Office and observed the surroundings. There were numerous Evil Dragons surrounding the Government Office on standby. In the sky above, just as many Evil Dragons were circling about.

“…Well, what are we going to do next?”

Rias had considered bursting directly into the Government Office. The Evil Dragons which were in front of the Government Office were within our expectations. Regardless of whether we launched a frontal assault or a surprise attack, it was inevitable that the enemy would guard their own strongholds. While we were thinking of what our next step would be, Koneko-chan pinched her nose and said

“…It stinks. It looks like we’ve been discovered.”

Koneko-chan pointed to a certain place. In the middle of a myriad of Evil Dragons, a long and slender snake-like creature appeared, it was a dragon with black scales. It’s dense and powerful aura was on a level that couldn’t be compared to the mass-produced Evil Dragons. —It was Níðhöggr. The instant I saw that figure, my anger immediately resurged. …It did that to Ophis…it did that to tou-san and kaa-san…. In order to stop me from getting carried away due to

my anger, Kiba placed his hand on my shoulder, and Asia held onto my hand. …I know, it's supposed to help me calm down right? Ah, I'm fine. —Thank you. I thanked Kiba and Asia in my mind. After I took a deep breath, I allowed myself to calm down. But, that bastard didn't care at all and called out towards us, though we didn't want to expose ourselves.

<< Guha, guhehehehe. COME OUT ALREADY! YOU GUYS ARE OVER THERE! >>

…They already knew. We all looked at each other, and then nodded. We readied our respective weapons, and I also speedily wore my armour. After finishing our preparations for a fight which could start at any time, we quickly moved to the front of the Government Office. Upon seeing Níðhöggr's ugly face, we couldn't help understanding the reason why Koneko-chan previously said that 'It stinks'. …A nasty smell wafted out of Níðhöggr. Everyone put on an expression of disgust. Ddraig said in a voice that everyone could hear

[—Níðhöggr.]

After hearing Ddraig's voice, the Evil Dragon deepened the smile on its ugly face, which caused everyone to become even more disgusted.

<< You there, you're Ddraig? Guhehe. Long time no see, you've actually become rather small. >>

I took a step forward, and asked Níðhöggr

"…So you're the bastard that caused Ophis to end up like that?"

After hearing my question, the Evil Dragon laughed nastily.

<< Guhe, guhehehe. That's right, Lucifer's son told me that there was an extremely tasty dragon egg. He then sent me in there. After that, I found that Ophis who had become small was in there. I told her to give the egg to me, but in the end I got rejected. But that egg is truly a very delicious egg, so I wanted to snatch it. Yes yes, your father and mother, Lucifer's son gave them to me. As soon as I showed them to Ophis, she actually quietened down. It was really amazing. Don't you think so? >>

…I see, it was exactly the same as what was recorded in the video…. That bastard's shrill voice continued.

<< And then, I beat Ophis really hard without holding back! And then, Ophis looked like she was going to let me do as I pleased, and she didn't fight back at all. So I took advantage of that and beat Ophis even harder! >>

… Níðhöggr spoke of its atrocities against Ophis with a smile on its face. I…was furious; I couldn't bear it any longer. I quietly began the chant for the true crimson armour. Níðhöggr didn't take any notice of me at all; it still had a gleeful look on its face, and its fetid saliva continued to drool out of its mouth as it continued speaking.

<< Because that Ouroboros Dragon[131] didn't show any resistance at all, I happily beat her up over and over again, I kicked her over and over again, and I stomped and bit on her; I was sooo haapppy >>

I was so mad that my fists were trembling as I clenched them… — …Ah, ah, that bastard…I'll destroy it so hard that not even a scrap will remain! Rias and Kiba both…both didn't stop me anymore. One step, one more step and I would be right in front of that Evil Dragon. I held onto the firm resolve that I had already established. Níðhöggr still spoke with pleasure as it disregarded the people who were around it.

<< Guhehehehe. That was really too cool. It was simply far too cool! But, I didn't get to eat the egg so I'm feeling very hungry. Since this is a rare opportunity, why don't you let me eat you? Eating the meat of a little Ddraig wouldn't be too bad right? Oh, yes. I should also eat your father and mother while I'm at it! >>

……. ……. …Ah, good, this bastard — it's an absolutely heartless evil being which is rotten to the bone. I clenched my jaw, squeezed out a few words.

"…I see, it's enough for me to know that."

For the crimson armour, I quietly finished chanting the last part.

"—And I will lead you to the Path of Heaven, glowing in deep

crimson light”

[Cardinal Crimson Full Drive!!!!]

With my entire body encased in crimson armour, I concentrated an enormous amount of aura into my fist.

“Since you want to eat, I’ll let you eat your fill.”

[Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost!!]

The sound of my power doubling echoed out, and the dragon’s aura which had been multiplied was focused all onto my right fist!

[Solid Impact Booster!!!!]

“—Have a good taste of my fist!”

I thrust my right arm which had swelled up in size due to the Solid Impact upwards! Níðhöggr created a defensive magic circle in front of it—. My fist was full of momentum and rage; it easily shattered that bastard’s defensive magic circle, and then smashed directly into its face in an instant. The sound of the attack impact was extremely powerful. My single punch sent the massive Níðhöggr flying. That bastard was blown right through the entrance of the first floor, but the momentum didn’t stop there, and it continued all the way to the back of the building. Using that opportunity, my nakama began to fight against the mass-produced Evil Dragons. At the entrance to the Government Office, the melee began.

“Holy Lightning Dragon!”

<< Burraahh! >>

Akeno-san summoned multiple Holy Lightning Dragons as she flew in mid-air, and almost instantly burnt a great number of the mass-produced Evil Dragons. Gasper directly turned into a beast, and summoned numerous monsters in the surrounding area.

“I’ll destroy you.”

“That’s right, this is a crucial moment!”

Koneko-chan's Kasha attacks and Rossweisse-san's magic attacks overlapped with each other and exterminated many of the mass-produced Evil Dragons. Facing such a vast number of Evil Dragons, my nakama were fiercely facing off against them; they really were a reliable bunch of nakama! After only a brief period of time, Níðhöggr flew out from the rubble, and cried out at the same time.

<< OOOWWWWWWWW! IT HUUUUURRTTSSS! >>

That bastard's face had become distorted after just a single punch of mine, and it was obviously that bones were broken. Níðhöggr came out from the Government Office, and looked at me with a furious expression.

<< W-What the hell! Y-You damned little Devil! I'll kill you! I'll definitely swallow you up! >>

…Ah, that's if you can do it.

"Then let me see you do it!"

I rapidly flew forwards, and attacked at a speed that Níðhöggr couldn't even register! Facing its abdomen, I threw a punch! After it stumbled back, I landed a kick on its hind legs. And then, I kept on kicking its back! After that, I gave it several more fierce blows to its face.

<< Guha! Guh! >>

That bastard didn't have the strength to fight back against my high-speed movement and attacks. It gracelessly spat fresh blood out of its mouth. …It dared to hurt my important friend — it did something like that to Ophis. Do you think it's settled with just that…? You also used my parents as hostages, and threatened Ophis…. I definitely won't let you go with just this! I seized Níðhöggr's throat with my arm which had thickened due to Solid Impact.

"Beating over and over again, kicking over and over again…that's what you said."

Níðhöggr shook its large body and freed itself from my grip. It flew back slightly, and then used its momentum to charge towards me

while it readied its front paws as it targeted me.

<< I'll flatten you! >>

It planned to stomp on me huh…would I be crushed by you so easily!? I flashed past its front paws, and launched another Solid Impact at its face.

"Don't bully my family's Dragon God-sama, you bastard!"

GOOON! It was the sound of another strong hit. With another one of my powerful blows, I sent that bastard flying into the Government Office again! At that time, Rias unexpectedly stepped forward. Standing beside me, she said

"—Ise, that's good. We'll use that technique to end it. If I don't do something like this to that Evil Dragon, I won't be satisfied."

"…That huh. I understand!"

In response to Rias, I allowed the wyverns to emerge from each of the gems of my armour. The wyverns which flew out responded to my thoughts, and released a brilliant red light as they began to circle around Rias! Rias and I started to synchronise our aura and breathing. …It was the combination technique that Rias and I practiced a countless number of times in the swimming pool below the Hyoudou household and at Rating Game venues—. When Rias' red aura and my red aura became one, the wyverns invoked a miracle! One of the wyverns attached itself onto Rias' right hand! — At the same time, the wyverns began to decompose into different shapes! That was — a gauntlet! The wyverns connected themselves end to end successively, now attaching onto Rias' body, and gradually formed a layer of armour! After all of the wyverns had latched on, what appeared there was — the [Crimson-haired Ruin Princess] dressed in crimson armour. That's right, this was my combination technique with Rias! By attaching the wyverns onto Rias' body, a female version was created — Rias' personal Boosted Gear Scale Mail. With Rias and I clad in armour, we readied our stance together, and cried out

""—[Crimson Extinct Dragonar]!""

That was the name of our combination technique!

“Rias! Let’s go!”

“Yes! Let’s go!”

We made cues to each other, and then flew forwards at high speed. Like two streaks of crimson light, we flew towards the Government Office that Níðhöggr just flew out of. Rias and I engaged in a union of melee attacks and destructive magic, which forced Níðhöggr to continue suffering an innumerable number of blows. Rias, who was currently wearing armour had her magic power enhanced by the power of the Sekiryuutei, and was even more powerful than usual. Like this, if we continued to attack in combination with each other, even a legendary Evil Dragon would be a cinch.

<< …Gah! Guaaahhh! OOOWWWW! >>

Níðhöggr was thrown into the sky by my full-powered uppercut as it moaned in pain as a result of our endless assault. It looked like our combination technique was really effective in its first real combat use! This combination technique, although it had several limitations, Rias was able to use the Sekiryuutei’s Boost, Transfer and Penetrate abilities. That is to say, Rias and I were able to use the Sekiryuutei’s power to fight separate enemies, and each of us could use different abilities. Although, as long as we used this, I wouldn’t be able to use the wyverns, and there was also a time limit for Rias… Having received my uppercut, Níðhöggr heavily slammed into the ground when it fell; its entire body then began to become shrouded in a faint light. After that, as if nothing had happened to it, it stood up again!

<< Guhehehehehehe! I’ve revived! >>

The Evil Dragon’s disgusting smile emerged on its face again! The wounds that it had suffered until now were all gone! …That pale light, and the changes in that Evil Dragon…it was familiar!

“Phoenix Tears!?”

That’s right, they were Phoenix Tears! That bastard triumphantly showed several small vials to us in its hand — Phoenix Tears.

<< It really is a convenient item. The injuries that I had just now have all been healed! I won't let you have your way again, I definitely won't forgive you guys! >>

In its anger, a black miasma burst out of Níðhöggr's entire body. …I see, they were secretly producing Phoenix Tears. That's why they could use it. Rias and I readied ourselves again as we confronted Níðhöggr.

"—That miasma, it'll cause damage as soon as it touches your body."

"Since it's come to this, we'll just have to beat it until it runs out of Phoenix Tears! I'll fight to the very end!"

That's right, it would be fine as long as Rias and I could beat it until it had no more Phoenix Tears left! Right now, that was definitely possible! Just as we were charging ahead—. A man inserted himself between Níðhöggr and us.

"—Those words are truly like those of a dragon. Hearing it makes even me delighted."

A man wearing a black coat — it was Crom Cruach! That guy, why would he be here? Although I was doubtful, he didn't mind me as he said to Níðhöggr

"Níðhöggr…you really are too naïve."

Watching Níðhöggr who continuously released miasma from its body, Crom Cruach sighed.

"…Crom Cruach, why are you here?"

He ignored Rias' question. Níðhöggr then looked towards Crom Cruach.

<< Guhehehe! If it isn't Master Crom! Although I was a little scared during our last encounter, together with me, you and I, let's swallow these guys up— >>

DOON! It was the sound of a clean and crisp hit. Looking towards the source, Crom Cruach's right arm had actually transformed into a

massive dragon's claw, and struck Níðhöggr directly in the face while it had its guard down.

<< OWWW, IT HURTS! IT HURTS SO MUCH! W-Why would you hit me!? >>

Fresh blood splattered out of its mouth as it cried out in pain. Crom Cruach twisted his neck, and the sound of his flexing muscles could be heard.

"…You, you guys are too fond of playing little tricks."

Even after being bathed in Níðhöggr's miasma, Crom Cruach still courageously said those words.

"I originally intended to learn what a dragon was by observing Ophis. But you would hinder me — well, I can destroy you until not a single speck is left can't I?"

Crom Cruach looked up towards the sky — no, he was looking at the top floor of the Government Office, as he shouted these words to that bastard.

"Rizevim Livan Lucifer, did you see that? Even if you want to control many Evil Dragons, you are mistaken."

With his coat fluttering, Crom Cruach bluntly asserted that after his confrontation with Níðhöggr.

"A true dragon will not be constrained from its birth till its death; it will live only according to its own will. That is what is known as a dragon!"

All of a sudden, Crom Cruach turned his eyes towards me and then pointed to the top floor of the Government Office as he said

"—Go."

—Huh. I was surprised by Crom Cruach's actions. Does that mean, this guy…wants to deal with Níðhöggr by himself?

"…Is that okay?"

I asked in confirmation.

"……"

As usual, it was his silent reply.

"…I'm really sorry about before."

Seeing me bow my head to apologise, he shook his head.

"—There's no need. Since you're a Heavenly Dragon, there's no need for you to lower your head to an Evil Dragon like me."

I couldn't say anything in return. Rias nodded as she faced me — and Asia as she said

"Ise, Asia! Leave this place to us, you two guys go first! Please go and save ogifu-sama and ogibo-sama as their 'son' and 'daughter'!"

—Yes! Rias…! She told Asia and I to go save my parents. …Yes, that's right. That role — was only for me and Asia. I looked towards Asia.

"Although it's dangerous, do you want to come?"

Asia's eyes were filled with strong determination as she nodded.

"—Let's go."

…Alright, that was simple then. I expanded my dragon wings, and lifted Asia into my arms as I prepared to fly off. I need to get to the top floor quickly! But the sky was completely black in colour as a massive number of mass-produced Evil Dragons were circling about. In order to reach the top floor, it looked like I'd have no choice but to break through the middle of them. Perhaps having just been on the top floor watching Crom Cruach, that cold dark aura — Rizevim's aura came over to us from the rooftop. Having experienced that bastard's aura, it was a chilling and evil aura which was impossible to forget. When I had held Asia with a princess carry and was about to fly out, the mass-produced Evil Dragons grouped together and rushed towards us. But they didn't reach us. —They were slashed through by a holy-demnoic sword with a dense and calm aura. In a single instant, three slashes were made—. With such godly speed, it seemed as though a single sword had split into three and attacked in

different directions. — Sandanzuki[141], it was a technique that Kiba had released. It was a technique of the former Shinsengumi captain Okita Sōji[151]. Although he had forbidden himself from copying his mentor's sword techniques, after his feelings about it changed, he was able to use if perfectly. Kiba's favourite techniques were originally his high-speed combat skills. Sandanzuki was one of the most skillful techniques of them all. Right in front of us, a horde of Evil Dragons had been sliced apart by three powerful strikes. Kiba held up his holy-demonic sword as he said to me

"Ise-kun, hurry up and go! Xenovia, Irina, I want you to come and accompany them!"

In response to Kiba's call, Xenovia and Irina ran over after they struck down the Evil Dragons they were dealing with using their holy swords.

"Leave it to us! We'll guard Asia well!"

"We're known as the Church Trio! Xenovia and I will escort you up there, Asia!"

Xenovia and Irina pat grabbed onto my shoulder. Just as I was about to start flying, Níðhöggr aimed a magic circle at me as it prepared to attack!

<< NO, I WON'T LET YOU GO! >>

Did it plan to fire a magic attack at me!? —Just as it did, it's attack was dispersed by a the powerful aura that Crom Cruach released.

"Your opponent is me. —It's been a long time since I've let people see it, but I'll let you experience it today."

Crom Cruach released an unprecedented aura that was far greater than it did before. Everything in the vicinity began violently shaking. The members of the Occult Research Club and the mass-produced Evil Dragons who were fighting against each other all stopped and turned their attention towards Crom Cruach. Surrounded by everyone's gaze, Crom Cruach's body began to change. His arms, legs, back, and then his head; they all changed into the appearance

that a dragon would originally have. His whole body radiated a black and gold aura. His two wings spread rapidly; there stood an enormous, grand and majestic dragon—. The Evil Dragon of Evil Dragons had liberated his original form. His breathing was accompanied by light flames.

[—Known as the strongest Evil Dragon, this is the strength that I possess!]

With both his wings wide open, it was an awe-inspiring look that people wouldn't be able to help but feel fascinated by. When Níðhöggr saw Crom Cruach's true form, its body began shivering, and its mouth also couldn't help shivering.

<< Eeee

straight punch directly at Níðhöggr as it moved forwards. Níðhöggr's massive body was sent flying. Whilst being propelled away, Níðhöggr knocked several buildings down with its body on the way. …So that's what his punch was like. It was like Sairaorg-san's, no, it was in a class even greater than that! I pulled myself together again, and turned my attention back towards flying. Although it would be nice to watch Níðhöggr and Crom Cruach's fight, the most important thing right now was to rescue my parents! I unfolded my wings, and flew up. In my arms, Asia — bowed and thanked Crom Cruach.

"U-Um, thank you so much!"

The enormous Evil Dragon then replied

[—Banana.]

"Eh?"

Crom Cruach then lifted the edge of his large mouth; it looked like he was smiling.

[Bananas really are nice things.]

Being extremely surprised by this, Asia's eyes began to moisten.

"Yes!"

As I flew in the air — I was almost stopped by Crom Cruach's sudden move. No, I was certainly distracted in that moment. …Like this, it was the third time since Tannin-ossan and Fafnir's Outrage. ……Damn it, damn it! I wholeheartedly regretted trying to pursue Crom Cruach at home. Although my parents and Ophis had been exposed to danger, I…I really was too stupid!

[That guy is a dragon that has been watching the human world for a long time.]

As I was reflecting, Ddraig said that to me.

[—Partner, you definitely can't forget Crom Cruach's appearance just now. That is the ultimate form of an Evil Dragon who has single-mindedly pursued power. —Well, what is borrowed will be returned.]

…Yes. Exactly! There are a lot of dragons who are worth learning from—. That's why I definitely have to become the strongest and greatest dragon — to become the Sekiryuutei! At that time, I'll definitely surpass Crom Cruach—.

## Part 3

Waiting in the air as we flew were a countless number of mass-produced Evil Dragons.

"Haaaaaah!"

"Oryaaaaah!"

While holding onto my body, Xenovia and Irina released holy waves at the Evil Dragons which flew past. Although they were struck down one after the other—.

"This really is endless!"

"What's going on? Just how many of them are there!?"

Faced with the endless onslaught of Evil Dragons, Xenovia and Irina were dumbfounded. Another group of Evil Dragons was now flying towards us! After we had flown about halfway towards the Government Office, Xenovia and Irina respectively opened their Devil and Angel wings and moved away from me. They began an aerial fight. The two of them cut down the Evil Dragons as they shouted

"There are a lot more Evil Dragons up here."

"Leave this place to us, you guys charge into the interior from that bottom window there and then run up, that may be faster!"

After saying that, Irina released a holy wave with Hauteclere, and destroyed a section of the glass wall. So that's where you want me to go in. After saying 'I'll leave the rest to you' to the two of them, I hurriedly flew ahead with Asia in my arms. It was true that there

were much fewer Evil Dragons here. At most, there were a few small Evil Dragons wandering through the corridors. While still in a position where I was holding Asia, I continued to run ahead. Even if there were Evil Dragons here, I ignored them, and focused only on running towards the top floor. At that time, a voice was projected out of a loudspeaker within the building.

[Good day, members of the Underworld. I am Diehauser Belial. My whereabouts were previously unknown, but as you can all see, I am currently safe.]

—What! I was surprised by the owner of the voice! It was actually the Champion's voice! He's upstairs? Just as I felt surprised, I suddenly halted in front of a particular room. I carefully looked at that room. Placed inside it were several monitors. Displayed on all of the screens was the image of Emperor Belial. …That, was it a live broadcast? Also, he addressed that just now to the members of the Underworld. …Did they hack into the TV stations to broadcast this out to the Underworld…? On the screen, the Emperor continued speaking with a serious expression

"Next, I have something which I must tell everyone. That is — the darkness of the Rating Games."

—What! …Sure enough, that was what the Champion wanted to convey. The conspiracy behind the Rating Games. I didn't stay to watch it any longer, and instead continued to move up to the top floor. While I was running, the Champion's voice continued to reverberate throughout the building.

[In my generation, like fast-growing mushrooms, talented young Devils have appeared one after another, struggling at the forefront of the Rating Games. Ranked second, Roygun Belphegor and ranked third, Bedeze Abaddon have learnt from each other that the content of the Games are praised by people.]

Upon seeing the stairs, I dashed up as fast as I could.

[But, I have heard of some disturbing news. Regardless of whether it's Roygun, Bedeze, or other contestants, they weren't very outstanding Devils when they were young—. When I first heard

about it, I laughed it off; I thought that they were just rumours which had spread as a result of jealousy towards those who had gained results with their talent.]

The Champion then lowered the tone of his voice.

[…But, on a certain day, my cousin Cleria told me that she had obtained some interesting information related to the Rating Games.]

—Do you know about the [King] piece, she asked. That's what Cleria Belial said. Cleria was Rias' predecessor who used to be in charge of her territory. During the era when the Three Factions were hostile to each other, she was the woman who had fallen in love with a human man, and in the end, she was tragically killed by the higher ups of the Underworld—.

[I simply replied 'Ah, that's nothing more than an urban legend'. But she continued. 'In the region of Japan that I've been appointed to, Maou Ajuka Beelzebub's hideout is nearby.' — she said. It was quite popular amongst some people that Ajuka-sama had been [making the Game] somewhere in Japan due to his interest.]

The Champion admonished Cleria.

[Don't bother the Maou. No matter what, don't carelessly approach that place, alright?]

But, having heard stories about contestants and the higher-ups from the Champion since she was young, she was highly interested in it, and began to collect information about it alone. But the investigation into more and more of this information was cut off halfway; Cleria believed that there was definitely something big behind all of it. The Champion's voice was filled with sorrow.

[…She, just because of some little story of mine, she was killed. Because I always stayed in the position of Champion, more than anything, I was displeased about the ridiculous reports that the reporters made. She knew everything about me, and she knew that my strength was genuine. …To me, she was a family member more important than anything else…I always regarded her as my own imouto.]

Following that, the Champion calmly said

[Speaking of the conclusion, it's clear that Cleria was erased. —She was eliminated by the government of the Underworld. This wasn't the decision of the current four great Maous, but the decision of the Old Devils. Because these facts were covered up, I didn't know about the truth. I was only told that my cousin Cleria had died. …In order to resolve my suspicions, I relied on a certain pipeline, and finally learned the truth.]

…Wasn't she eliminated because she had fallen in love with a human man…? In other words, wasn't that the reason why the Champion Diehauser Belial joined Qlippoth…? A certain pipeline, by that he meant Rizevim and Qlippoth. He obtained information from them. Emperor Belial continued

[The conclusion is that — the [King] piece exists. And in the photos and information that I am now showing everyone, they have only obtained the strength that they have today as a result of using the [King] piece.]

I was afraid that the video being shown to the people of the Underworld right now was the video which we were shown at Ajuka Beelzebub-sama's place. The information that the Champion obtained by cooperating with Rizevim was the truth behind Cleria's death and the darkness of the Rating Games. …That information had now been released! The Underworld must be in a state of chaos…! The Champion then told the residents of the Underworld about the darkness of the Rating Games that they didn't know about —. The Champion also stated the exact things that we heard about from Beelzebub-sama. I quietly continued to advance towards the top floor. This is — his revenge against the Old Devils as the Champion for killing Cleria…! When I had finally reached the observation room of the top floor, the Champion's broadcast had just ended. The image on the large monitor in front of me became a mosaic of static noise. It was a very spacious looking room. It might even have enough space to serve as the venue for a fight…. When I stepped into the room, Emperor Belial turned around and questioned me. It seems like he noticed my presence a while ago.

“…So, Sekiryuutei-kun. What do you plan to do with me? By giving this truthful information to the masses, it’ll be enough to condemn those guys. Moreover, there are also the matters regarding Agreas, and the match with Raiser Phoenix-san…”

I put Asia down, and then stepped forward. I slowly moved closer to the Emperor. …With what was happening in the Underworld, I could only place my trust in the Maou-sama. Beelzebub-sama had also told me that before, so that I could do the things that I had to. In that case, my current mission was—. Rescue my parents safely.

“—Anything’s fine in this situation.”

A very familiar voice which would make people feel uneasy came into my ears. Looking over to where it came from, a silver-haired Devil emerged from the shadow of the display equipment.

“I have — no, as the son of Lucifer, haven’t I already allowed this, Belial?”

“…Rizevim-sama”

Rizevim pat the Champion’s shoulder, and then turned his gaze towards me.

“It seems we meet again after our previous meeting in Heaven, Sekiryuutei. Also — Gigantis Dragon Princess[161].”

I suppressed my anger as I said to him

“…Yo, son of Lucifer. I really wanted to see you. Well, hurry up and return them, my parents! …And, why would you go after Ophis?”

Upon hearing my question, Rizevim shrugged.

“I just wanted Ophis’ assistance all of a sudden, that’s all. Ophis — perhaps it’s more suitable to say Lilith; I wanted to increase her power…. Níðhöggr relied on Aži Dahāka’s magic to enter the underground space of the town that you all live in; at this time, your parents were originally used as hostages, and since it was a friend’s parents who were being used as hostages, even if it’s that Dragon God, she would still reveal openings. But, because there was

external interference, that didn't happen."

That really was the worst way of thinking, this bastard…! I could feel my anger rising continuously! Rizevim revealed a fearless smile. … But looking closely, he seemed to have dark rings under his eyes, or was it just my imagination?

"It's really nice of you to make it. —There's also someone else, a highly important guest who has arrived."

—Ah! I immediately understood what Rizevim was saying. From the other side of the glass wall outside the observation room, a very powerful aura could be felt. With a flash of light, it sped over in the air from quite a distance away! The person who forcefully smashed through the glass wall was Vali, with his entire body clad in pure white armour! As soon as Vali arrived, he faced Rizevim and said

"…You've been cornered, Rizevim."

The corners of Rizevim's mouth rose as he made a smile.

"The last to show up is my lovely grandson. It looks like every one of tonight's main members have stepped onto the stage."

…That bastard Rizevim, he was really pretentious! No matter how gorgeous your words are, you can't hide your malice! I saw through you a long time ago! I stepped closer to Vali, and asked him

"What about the others?"

"They're with the people on your side outside, going on a rampage."

So that's how it was, they had congregated below. Vali's aim was Rizevim. But there was also a reason for me.

"I suppose you aren't going to let anyone else interfere. But, let me do this with you. …In a way, I'm also someone involved."

"…Fine. You're also considered someone who has suffered similar misfortune. We'll fight together, but don't get in my way!"

After exchanging my opinion with Vali, we confirmed each other's intentions. The two Heavenly Dragons readied their posture in front

of Rizevim. Rizevim showed a sarcastic smile, and said to us

“Well then, please allow me to introduce the audience for this show.”

Rizevim clicked his fingers, and a transportation magic circle appeared in a corner of the observation room. After the light of the transfer faded, the ones who appeared there were — my tou-san and kaa-san.

“—It’s the Hyoudou fusai[171].”

The two people who were introduced by Rizevim were completely unaware of the situation, and appeared extremely confused. I released the helmet of my armour, and called out to them

“…Tou-san! Kaa-san!”

After noticing my voice, my parents looked over at me.

“…I-Ise…? Why are you wearing such a strange thing on your body? And why is Asia also here?”

“…From the beginning, this silver-haired man has been saying some strange things. Your kaa-san and I are both confused. Just what is happening…?”

……. …Based on kaa-san’s words, I knew what kind of understanding that the two of them had about the current situation. In other words, the fact that I am a Devil was already—. With vigour, I asked Rizevim

“…Rizevim, you bastard, what the hell did you say?”

That bastard had a carefree expression, and smiled with pleasure.

“Nothing much, just some trivial things. Next up is the main topic. As long as you do a real performance, your parents won’t understand the truth about you.”

……That asshole! …He was forcing my parents to watch our battle with their own eyes…fuck him! My heart was violently pounding nonstop, and I couldn’t stop my arms or legs from shaking. —I definitely couldn’t let my parents see me fight with supernatural

abilities! But, if I don't fight, if I don't win, I won't be able to save my parents! I had no choice to refuse, I could only fight! …How could this be? Fine, I haven't had any good excuses up until now! My heart continued to pound wildly against my chest, and at that time, Vali said to me

"I'll deal with Rizevim. You deal with the Champion."

After taking a deep breath, I replied

"…I didn't expect that I'd have to fight against the opponent that I planned to fight against in the future right here…. I really didn't expect it."

"…Anyway, both of them are monsters. Even if we switch opponents, it'll be a tough fight. Since you want to save your parents, show them your unyielding determination to survive."

"…I already died twice before. If that really happens, I'll have died three times."

I reluctantly mocked myself. …But, if the third time that I die is for my parents, then that would be fine. But I didn't have any intention of dying! After I exchanged a glance with Vali, we each readied ourselves against our respective opponents. I would fight the Champion, and Vali was up against Rizevim. The two people opposite us responded, and lined up. Four people now faced each other. After a brief moment of silence—. Without any further words, the battle began. The first to charge ahead was Vali. He advanced directly towards Rizevim who stood in front of him while clenching a fist enveloped in a massive amount of aura. Although he landed a direct hit, Rizevim easily dissolved Vali's aura which had been strengthened by his Sacred Gear! Vali staggered.

"…Argh, as long as it's associated with a Sacred Gear, direct attacks won't work."

After muttering that, he continued to rush forwards to fight! It was a combination of high speed kicks and punches! But what was surprising was that Rizevim was quickly dodging all of them. Taking advantage of an opening, he counterattacked against Vali! From

Rizevim's back, the wings of Lucifer expanded, and he punched Vali directly in the abdomen with a fist imbued with demonic energy! The instant that Vali was hit by that punch, his armour was shattered as a result of the Sacred Gear Canceller's effect, and he suffered a direct hit to the abdomen.

"…Guah!"

Taking a solid punch, Vali cried out. Blood oozed out from a corner of his mouth, but he readied his posture, and equipped his armour again. It was the same as the time when I fought against Rizevim in Heaven; as long as I took a direct attack, or even just a scratch, he would touch my armour, and I would receive a painful attack! If I used my Penetrate ability, perhaps I would be able to defeat that guy…. But since Vali said that he would defeat him himself, I should focus on defeating the Champion in front of me! The fight on my side began; I reduced our distance, and then began an unrestrained close-combat fight. There were no openings at all. I couldn't find any at all. Within a brief exchange of blows, every single one of my attacks were effortlessly evaded by him. The gap between our strength was far too wide! I asked the Champion

"…It doesn't seem like your peerage is here."

Indeed, the Champion was here by himself. On the way up here, I didn't encounter any of his peerage members; presumably, this was because he gave the order for his peerage not to follow him here. As I had guessed, the Champion said

"That's right, I told them to stay outside as they have no need to follow me to this place."

…So he decided to shoulder the responsibility for all of this himself. That was his so-called duty. He really did possess the qualities of a Champion.

[Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost!!]

I used the power of Boost to multiply the power of my fist, and thrust it upwards in at once! But, the fist which I had amplified the power of

so much was easily evaded. It simply hit the air. I straightened my posture, and attempted to charge forwards again. The Champion touched my fist frontally! Suddenly, the amplified aura which had enveloped my fist instantly vanished! —What! …My power disappeared!? It was invalidated!? No, it was slightly different from Rizevim's ability! If I was touched by that bastard, even my armour would disappear! Just then, it only felt as if the power of Boost on my fist had disappeared! Seeing this, the Champion said

"—[Worthless]. That is my, the Belials' ability. I do believe that you've heard of it…"

…I see, so that was [Worthless]. The power which could invalidate special abilities—. That's how he was able to invalidate my Boost ability. Even so, I didn't stop attacking! I then ramped up the intensity of my attacks. I madly attacked with punches and kicks in combination with each other, and unleashed potent shots of demonic energy, yet all of my attacks were still invalidated by the Champion with a small gesture. Even when I fired shots of demonic energy, they simply burst into nothingness in the palm of his hands. I enhanced by attacks with [Boost] and [Penetrate] as I continued to attack. But the attacks which had been strengthened with [Boost] were still invalidated by him. Even when I used the ability of [Penetrate], I was unable to hit him; despite counterattacking with [Penetrate] in a blind spot, I was unable to do anything effective. …If I was able to land a direct hit on him with [Penetrate], the damage would be transmitted to him directly! —But, I couldn't land a hit on him! Every single one of my attacks had been evaded! The Champion's evasive movements were akin to an elegant dance. Conversely, I was the only one who was sweating profusely in my armour. —The difference between us was simply too big. The opponent wasn't using his full power at all! This was someone who was Maou-class! The absolute Champion! The top ranker in the Rating Games! If I could use Crimson Blaster or Longinus Smasher then it might be possible. But, I couldn't even put a dent in the Champion's confidence! Nevertheless, I didn't stop attacking, and continued to face Emperor Belial. While avoiding my attacks as if they were a novice's, he calmly said

“Your attacks are good; they’re straight and direct without a trace of hesitation. I really would like to have a contest against you in a Game.”

“It’s too late for that now! Haven’t you already done what you’ve wanted to do!? As a result of that, the entire Underworld has been plunged into chaos! Your…the Champion’s confession carried such a heavy weight!”

That’s right, after listening to everything that the Champion said, there would definitely be disputes everywhere in the Underworld. Would they think that it was a lie? No, he was the Champion who had absolute support in the Underworld, and that confession was both heavy and realistic. Even if the Champion was associated with acts of terrorism, no, precisely because he was willing to associate with terrorists, it must have been the truth. The people would probably believe that.

“Ah, I understand. I completely understand.”

“You didn’t completely understand it!? —Your attacks carry a sense of hesitation with them!”

That’s right, the Champion, he — hadn’t directly attacked me at all! At most, he fought against me by using his ability to invalidate mine. If he really had the intention, the instant that my power was invalidated, he could have given me a fatal injury! The Champion, he — was hesitating in this battle!

“…Ku!”

Just when the Champion and I were speaking to each other, Vali had been knocked to floor. He got back up again, equipped his armour again, and confronted Rizevim…if things continued like this, he would eventually be defeated due to exhaustion! If he was able to use Juggernaut Drive, then it would be another story, but simply using that would consume an incredible amount of stamina and demonic energy. Since the opponent had the power of the Sacred Gear Canceller, all that stamina and demonic energy would go to waste if it the transformation was carelessly invalidated. For Vali, fighting like this right now would be his best choice.

“Hoho, what is it? Vali. Using attacks like this against your grandfather are useless yo.”

Rizevim said that with a pleased expression…on the other hand, Vali had an extremely dissatisfied expression. Vali extended his right hand out after releasing its armour, and generated several magic circles from his right hand which he then used to fire bursts of magic towards Rizevim. Then Rizevim — didn’t use his cancellation ability, and instead dodged them! Those attacks were purely magic! They didn’t have anything to do with a Sacred Gear, they were pure magic attacks! That guy Vali, he had an outstanding talent for magic! So that’s how it was, he relied on his Balance Breaker armour to reduce the gap in their physical abilities, and then used magic or demonic energy to attack Rizevim. As Vali attacked with magic, he said with a displeased tone.

“……This really is an eyesore. As the son of Lucifer, you behave like a Lilin[181], yet you intend to display some kind of dignified attitude…”

Vali pointed at Rizevim as he spoke.

“Your original aura which you’ve tried to hide within yourself, but can’t contain from leaking out is equally sinister and ruthless. Rizevim, you’re evil and malicious to begin with.”

With this pointed out by his grandson, Rizevim stared blankly for a moment, and then laughed ‘hehe’ in a rather evil manner.

“If so, how about you, stupid grandson-kun? Could it be that you can’t even win a single battle of revenge against this old and feeble grandfather as a trashy dragon?”

He was even sticking his tongue out; he was still playing around with his usual clownish attitude. Ah, that’s what I also thought. No matter how dignified he made his words and deeds sound, this foolish attitude right now was Rizevim’s true nature. Even if he acted with a Maou’s demeanor, it was nothing more than an act—. As his grandson, Vali had already seen through his grandfather’s true nature. —At that time, Rizevim turned his eyes towards me, and then called out

“Champion-kun! That! Hurry up and use that!”

He suddenly issued an instruction. I watched as the Champion took out a small vial of red liquid from his chest pocket. The Champion, without a single noise, instantaneously disappeared on the spot—.

“Gah!”

He was actually grabbing my face…! The distance between us was closed in an instant! The Champion used a finger to open the lid, and with his other hand he forced my mouth open and planned to pour it in. In order to resist, I pushed the Champion away with both hands, but a small portion of the liquid in the vial still entered my mouth! My counterattack missed as the Champion darted all the way to the back of the room! …My mouth was filled with an awful taste, the taste and smell of blood lingered on my tongue, and it felt very viscous. But it also seemed like a familiar taste. My mouth would often be filled with it during battles. Yes, that red liquid was — blood! …I didn’t know what kind of blood it was at all; why did they make me drink it—. Dokun dokun! Then, my heart rapidly began to throb! At the same time, I couldn’t stop my body from trembling all over. Following that, my body began to slowly heat up from the inside, and the heat spread to my entire body! The heat which was generated within my body surprised even me! I couldn’t stand it, and I released the armour on my right arm. Clearly, I had no intention of letting my right arm turn into a dragon’s arm, but it turned into a dragon’s arm by itself. …I knew that I didn’t enhance my dragon’s power. My arms and legs…they turned into those of a dragon! I immediately understood. Yes, that blood was — dragon’s blood! My dragon’s blood was used in order to enhance Gasper’s ability. Similar to that, the Champion forced me to drink the blood of a dragon. Hence, the dragon’s power within me had increased; my body became hot, and I couldn’t stop my body from changing. My arms had already dragonified, and an abnormal heat was now reaching my head! My helmet then released on its own—

“Hyaa!”

I heard kaa-san’s scream. I looked over at kaa-san, and she looked back at me with an expression as if she was looking at a monster.

…What's going on? While I was thinking about that, I used my hand to touch my own face. …The sensation of touching the human skin that I normally had couldn't be felt, but what I felt instead was the texture of very rigid skin. Rizevim sent a small magic circle flying towards me. A mirror emerged from that magic circle. I looked in the mirror — my skin had become hard, my eyes had been enlarged, and my teeth had grown out of my mouth; it was a completely alien appearance. …I, even my face started to become dragonified…. In this situation, Rizevim lightly laughed as he gleefully said to my parents

"Please look at this carefully, Hyoudou fusai. This is what that son-shaped thing in front of you looks like — a monster."

—! …Bastard, he would actually say that right now!? From the very beginning, he planned to have me dragonify, and let my parents see it!? He actually prepared this as some kind of a show!? …This was his payback to me for beating him up in Heaven. That bastard was actually so obsessed about that…fuck! —Seriously, even dog shit would be better than this bastard…! Rizevim continued

"In the spring of last year, your precious son died. This dragon then usurped your son's position. He lived a false life with you. During the break, didn't he say to you that he needed to travel away? That was because he needed to go to the world of the Devils. At the end of the year, wasn't he always busy, and unable to spend time together with you? That's because he was doing certain activities, as an alien, and as a monster!"

That bastard, he was really enjoying this, he was saying such things with a joyful expression! My parents' faces were dyed with fear as they looked at Rizevim and me. …I didn't want to look at the expression on my parents' faces.

"…Please don't look at me, tou-san, kaa-san."

…I tried to say such words. If there was a hole in here, I would want to hide in there! With such an appearance, I definitely didn't want to be seen like this by my parents! Stop it! Please stop! I hope this is all just a dream! Like this…with this…uhh! My…mind collapsed. I could do nothing but cry—. Meanwhile, Rizevim continued to speak

with a playful expression

“Tou-san? Kaa-san? Oh ho, did you fusai hear that? That monster still plans to use lies to deceive the two of you, right?”

At this time, standing in front of me, someone shielded me. —It was Asia! Asia had tears streaming down her face as she desperately told tou-san and kaa-san about the situation

“Otou-san, okaa-san! This person is Ise-san! Please, the both of you have to believe this! Indeed, he was reincarnated into a Devil, and he also has the power of a dragon in his body. Even so, it isn’t wrong that he is Hyoudou Issei! Please believe in him! You must…I’m begging you!”

Looking at Asia as she cried, Rizevim smiled as he said

“Hyoudou fusai, this blonde-haired girl is also a Devil. Please don’t be deceived. Things like Devils were originally monsters which used sweet temptations to pull humans into the abyss; presently, you fusai have been lured in by the Devil’s whisper, so it would be better to take note of that.”

……Asia was a good child. …The only reason that Asia died is because of me…. …Tou-san, kaa-san, its fine if you don’t trust me. But, only Asia — you only need to trust Asia…! …I…couldn’t say a thing; bearing such verbal assaults, I could only blindly apologise.

“……Sorry. ……Kaa-san, tou-san……I’m sorry……”

…I’m guilty of deceiving you until now. This was my silent punishment. Perhaps this was the moment of my retribution. Because I never told you about being a Devil. No, even if I said so, would my parents believe it? Also, if I did tell them, there was the possibility that I would drag them into the supernatural world. Supposing that was the case…I couldn’t. …However, as a result, my parents were still endangered. That’s right, all of it was my fault! If I never got involved with Raynare, things wouldn’t have become like this. If I was smarter, perhaps I would’ve found a way to live as a human. …But, you know tou-san, kaa-san. I don’t regret becoming a Devil in the slightest. I met many people, and I learnt a lot of things.

As a human, those were things which were absolutely impossible to experience. Only this, I'll definitely never regret. The only thing that I regret is — I never told my parents about my true identity. So, I need to apologise to them.

"—I'm truly very sorry, tou-san, kaa-san."

So, I apologised. That was all I could do. Even if I'm rejected by those two, even if they cut off our parent-child relationship, that's also fine. Afterwards, it'll be fine as long as I can rescue them. Yeah, I definitely need to rescue them. I swear! After I rescue them — I'll leave. I can't allow them to be endangered again, I will — obediently disappear. From my parent's side, I'll obediently disappear. So, I'm really sorry, tou-san, kaa-san. I burst into tears. I — repented. After I had prepared myself to be rejected by them, a voice was directed towards me.

"…You are Ise? Is that right?"

—It was tou-san's voice. Tou-san walked a little closer to me. Rizevim was shocked for a moment, and then he said with dismay

"Hold on, Hyoudou-shi[191]. You mustn't be fooled. Telling such stories while showing such emotional tears, it's something that Devils can calmly do."

But, tou-san shook his head, and still approached me.

"You're wrong, he is Ise. …That bad habit of apologising is exactly the same."

Kaa-san then followed behind him as she nodded and said

"Yes, I also know. Even if the appearance of his face has changed, I understand his response. Ise. That child is Ise!"

The two of them — they arrived in front of me and Asia. Having dragonified, I couldn't properly look at them…but tou-san stood in front of me, and protected me. Standing in front of Rizevim and the Champion, his legs were trembling but he still shouted

"From now on, I won't let you do anything to my child! If you want to

lay a hand on Ise, then you'll have to send me flying first!"

—Mn! …I was shocked by tou-san's words.

"…For me, when I was born, it was very ordinary, nothing special ever happened. I never thought about doing anything special. I just wanted a plain and ordinary job; I just wanted a normal family; I just wanted to live an ordinary life with that family. Even now, that's what I want."

Tou-san clearly asserted.

"Whether he's some Devil or not, or whether he's some Maou, I don't know anything about it at all to be honest. Even in this current situation, I'm confused to the point that I don't understand any of it. …But, I know one thing; this child is my child! This is obvious, because he's my Ise."

Rizevim shook his head, and said to tou-san

"Hey hey hey. Otou-san. You need to take a good look. Does that red creature look like a human to you? Does it look like your son? You, listen carefully. That is a Devil, and that is also a dragon. In other words, it's a monster."

"No, he is my child. My Ise. You won't understand. But, I can understand. That's because, I'm his parent. These past seventeen years, I've been raising this child."

In response to tou-san's words, Rizevim sighed.

"What have you understood in these mere seventeen years, human-kun? Do you even understand the truth and reality of this world, human? The way to read signs; what can you who cannot even see the nature of one's aura possibly understand?"

In order to protect me, kaa-san tightly embraced me.

"You're Ise? Ah, I can understand after holding on to you. This child is Ise. That's because I've hugged you many times before, so I understand."

Tou-san opened his arms, and then made a protective pose as he

said—.

“—These seventeen years are everything about our family. They’re not trivial things which can simply be explained!”

Kaa-san hugged me as she also appealed

“Yes. This child — is my lovely son.”

“That’s right, even if he looks like this! Even so…even so!”

Tou-san looked at my face, and then heartily said

“—Even if he has reincarnated and his appearance has changed, he’s still my child, isn’t that right?”

—Mn. ……. ……. Tears streamed down my face. They were unstoppable as they trickled down my cheeks. ……I had already made up my mind and resolve that I would be rejected by my parents so I kept on apologising. —But, regardless of whether it was tou-san or kaa-san who looked at me, they still said that I was their child. Even if there really existed something that only a parent could understand, I—. Tou-san hugged me, as well as kaa-san and Asia; we hugged each other together as I cried.

“In that case, I’ve got something that’ll be even less pleasing than this. As parents, you’re not very fortunate!”

Kaa-san hugged me and Asia as she called out

“Yes! Even if he’s become like this and he’ll recognise me as his haha…that’s enough!”

Asia — she simply continued to shed tears, and sobbed. Tou-san faced Rizevim, the son of the Maou and bellowed!

“This child is our child! We won’t allow you to lay a single finger on him!”

In that moment, my body radiated a warm aura, and it cloaked the four of us together—.

# Part 4

Before I had realised — I was floating through a place which seemed like the Dimensional Gap. This is…reality? No, it didn't feel real. If I had to say what it was like, it was the same as when I saw the world in Akeno-san's heart during the fight with Loki—. A screen appeared before me all of a sudden. Displayed on the screen was the consultation room of an unfamiliar hospital. Inside were a doctor and…a very familiar male and female couple. Looking carefully, they appeared to be tou-san and kaa-san when they were young!? It felt as though I was looking at the younger version of my parents that I had only seen in photos. What was going on? This space is…tou-san's and kaa-san's memories? Could everything in their memories be seen through this display? Was I actually subconsciously using Bilingual with kaa-san…? While my mind began to be filled with such questions, the doctor and my parents on the screen showed a sombre expression. The doctor told my parents

[—I'm very sorry, please give up on the child in your belly.]

Hearing this, kaa-san — burst into tears on the spot. Tou-san woefully supported kaa-san's shoulder. …Was this a scene from the obstetrics and gynecology department? It was a scene that I had never heard about before…. Just as I was lost in this confusion, kaa-san's voice reverberated within the space.

[When I discovered that my body would make it very difficult to give birth to children, it was a few years after I had married my husband. It was always difficult to conceive a child, and it was very difficult to finally become pregnant after all those years. But, because of my body…]

The scenery changed, and it became a familiar living room. It was my old house. Sitting on the sofa, kaa-san was still in tears.

[I'm sorry, my dear…]

As kaa-san continued to grieve and cry, tou-san comforted her.

[About that — you don’t need to worry about it! Although the unborn child in your belly is very unfortunate, you can’t give up! You can definitely give birth to our baby!]

…The child in her belly, their baby…. This, don’t tell me…. Are these the events which occurred before I was born? But, was I not successfully born…? I was confused by this situation that I had not heard of at all. At this time, I heard kaa-san’s voice again.

[Two years after that, there was another opportunity.]

The scenery changed again. On the screen, kaa-san was gently stroking her own belly with a joyful expression.

[This is great! We finally did it! It’s okay! Everything’s okay now!]

Tou-san was gleefully hopping up and down around the room. Amidst the vision of these memories, I saw my parents visit a bookstore where they bought many books about birth, and also childcare related books. They had purchased an excessive number of books, and were then immersed in reading them. In order to ensure their child’s successful birth, they went to the obstetrics and gynecology department — the memories of their recurring consultations unfolded in front of me one by one.

[In order to ensure the birth of our child, my husband and I paid careful attention this time. We always attached great importance to the child in my belly—]

Once again, the display returned to the scene inside the consultation room of the obstetrics and gynecology department. The doctor solemnly explained to my parents as they had a look of despair on their faces

[Hyoudou-san, although it’s painful for you, it’s definitely not because of the things between the two of you, there are many other factors —]

On the way home in the snow, tou-san stopped in the middle of the road, and faced kaa-san as he spoke to her.

[…I give up]

Tou-san who had been so excited — burst out crying.

[If anything happens to your body again like last time, I…really won't be able to bear i-it…!]

Kaa-san hugged tou-san tightly, as the two people wept in sorrow.

[We almost gave up on having children, and instead planned on changing our attitude to adapt to a different lifestyle.]

What unfolded before my eyes was just the modest and harmonious life of my parents. The two of them travelled together, they went shopping together,and they went fishing together; they were always together—. My figure was not there. …The figure of my parents' two children was not there.

[But, in the eighth year that I was together with my husband—]

When tou-san came back from work, he was really given a shock by kaa-san's report in the kitchen

[A b-baby!? R-Really!?]

After tou-san heard this news — with a determined expression, he placed his hands on kaa-san's shoulders and said

[…I understand now! This time for sure! This time we definitely have to give everything we've got to give birth to this child!]

Kaa-san happily began to shed tears while she made a smile. After that, the sight of those two working hard for the birth of their baby emerged again. More than ever before, tou-san read all kinds of books, and kaa-san was even more mindful of her diet. When kaa-san was trying to lift things, tou-san desperately rushed forward to stop her. In order to protect their unborn child, the two of them visited specialised agencies. On a snowy night, tou-san was barefoot in a certain shrine, and had already completed Hyakudomairi[101].

[Please! Please make sure! Please make sure that my unborn child will be delivered safely!]

On a freezing, cold and snowy night, tou-san had already bowed his

head and prayed over and over while facing the main hall of the shrine.

[I don't care how much of my life you take! It's fine even if my remaining lifespan is halved! So please, I definitely need it! Protect the child in the womb! Please! I beg of you!]

Even if his feet were so cold that they became numb, tou-san still continued to bow and offer his prayer to the god. Tou-san, who prayed to the god…only wished that the child in the womb would be safe. On the screen, the seasons changed, and it had become a warm spring. Kaa-san was lying on a bed in a hospital room, and beside her — the baby that she had successfully delivered was lying there.

[It's a baby boy.]

The nurse told tou-san who was still in disbelief. After a brief moment, tou-san finally regained his senses and said

[……Ah, I see…. ……It's really my child…]

[Yes, it's the baby of you and me…. It took eight years.]

Kaa-san emotionally said as she lied in bed. The nurse then urged tou-san to hold the baby. Seeing the baby in his arms, tou-san smiled widely and tried to hold back his tears as he said

[……It's nice to meet you, I, I am your otou-san.]

The baby's eyes finally met tou-san's eyes. In that instant, tou-san could no longer hold back his tears. Tears streamed down his face as he continued to smile at the baby in his arms.

[……Thank you. That you were born…really…thank you…]

Kaa-san and tou-san cried tears of joy together, and she then asked tou-san

[…Have we decided on the name?]

[…Ah, it's [Issei]. That embodies the hope that'll he'll be able to live an honest life[1][1][1]. ]

After hearing this name, kaa-san made a weak laugh.

[…Ah, that isn't very creative.]

[T-This is all I could think of even after trying so hard!]

[Ufufu. …But, that name has a good sound. Issei. Ise. My child.]

The baby…I was surrounded by the warmth of those two people.

[Ah, our child. —Yes, Issei.]

What was displayed on the screen afterwards was consistent with my memories. At night, tou-san read picture books to me when I couldn't fall asleep. When the animals were sad, and when he read a sad story to me, I wouldn't stop crying. On a certain night, tou-san was away on a business trip. Kaa-san had called tou-san to tell him that I was in the hospital emergency room because I was suffering from a high fever. In the end, tou-san ended his trip early, and then took a flight to hurry back as soon as he could. In primary school, I ran together with tou-san in the parent and child three-legged race, tou-san and I worked hard to aim for first place. In the end, we could only take third place. Afterwards, on one side of the playground, the three people in our family ate fried chicken and tamagoyaki together; the taste from that time was something which I had never forgotten. In middle school, the first time that I put on my uniform, it made my parents really excited. We took quite a few photos in front of the school gate that day. Although I felt a little bit embarrassed about it, my parents seemed happier than ever. …On Father's Day, I bought tou-san a rather cheap tie, and on Mother's day, I gave her a floral apron from home education class. But the two of them still treasured those things. Finally, the last scene which appeared was — me on the verge of tears in the corner of a department store when I was young. …I remembered that. Our family of three went to the department store of a nearby prefecture that we rarely visited. I was attracted by a strange item, and got separated from my parents. The people who came and went were unfamiliar faces; with a guilty conscience I decided on one thing, that I would not cry. If I didn't see tou-san or kaa-san, it would be fine if I just found a place with a large clock and waited for them there—. In order to follow through with this decision, I stood in a square with a clock tower nearby, and

waited for the appearance of my parents who would desperately come looking for me.

[Chichi-saaaaan, haha-saaaaaan.]

When I saw them, I was unable to stand it any longer, and I called out as I ran towards them; our family of three, without minding anyone else tightly embraced each other.

[Hey, Ise! You worried me to death!]

[Really, didn't we say that you shouldn't leave our side!?]

[I'm soorrry! I'm sooorrrry!]

I was crying as I apologised…. After that, the three of us didn't separate again as we returned home, hand in hand—. —At that time, the warmth in my hands, I never forgot it. ……Tou-san……kaa-san…uh. …I was prayed for, and I was the child who was born from your hopes. Although your lineage wasn't special, nor were you wealthy people, I was the child which you two endured and struggled to finally have. These memories were surely things that could be seen everywhere. These memories were definitely not experiences which could be called uncommon. Even so…even so, it was my, and my family's journey over seventeen years. Not a single person was missing; for us three, those were irreplaceable times. Ah, tou-san, kaa-san, I — am the child of you two. I am Issei. The Issei that belongs to the two of you! —I am Hyoudou Issei! …The display of those memories still continued. In the time that the three of us spent together — a blonde haired girl also joined. —It was Asia. Kaa-san's voice traversed over to me

[We've both lived for so long now, yet we were actually able to have such a beautiful daughter.]

It was a scene where Asia smiled happily as she spoke to tou-san and kaa-san—.

[Supposing that we had a daughter back then, if we were really able to give birth to a daughter, it might be like how we're living together with Asia right now. I often think that.]

Asia said to my parents

[Otou-san, okaa-san]

Upon hearing Asia's words, both tou-san and kaa-san appeared to be deeply moved.

[—We're truly happy. You're able to be my — our daughter. Although I don't know what happened to this child in the past, this kind child is able to call me her haha. Yes, even so, she really is my daughter.]

Thus, we became a family of four, and then we increased by one more person, and another person — before we knew it, there were many people who sat around the dinner table with us. Tou-san and kaa-san looked at this lively house, and smiled as they exchanged a glance with each other.

[Hey, my dear.]

[What is it?]

[It's no longer just the two of us.]

[Indeed, that's right. We not only have a son. —We also have many more daughters.]

[To be able to live such a vibrant life…I'm truly happy.]

[The twenty five years that I spent with you—. Although it's been very long, perhaps it was all for this.]

[…I want to watch for a little longer.]

[Yes, if I could make a wish, I'd want to be able to continue to watch over this family—]

Seeing the figure of my two parents, I covered my face with my hands, and tears silently began streaming down. In that instant, the space broadened, and I was flown out—.

# Part 5

……. …When I awoke, I was aware of the true feelings of my parents. I knew the love which my parents possessed. —I was born and raised from the love of my parents. Even now, they were still watching over me. …My tears would not stop; they couldn't be stopped at all. I tightly held onto tou-san and kaa-san as I said

"…Hey, tou-san, kaa-san. —I, can I really be your child?"

With radiant smiles filled with happiness, the two of them nodded.

"Of course."

"Ise is our child."

"……Thank you."

…Ah…ah. I, I already—. —Yes, I no longer had anything to fear. I knew that my parents still fully accepted me. There was no doubt; they believed that I was their child. …Where else would I be able to find such happiness…? Such a beautiful thing, where else would I find it—. I stood up, and then faced the Champion and Rizevim as I declared

"…Rizevim, and also Diehauser-san, thank you. Thanks to you, today I — no longer have any fears."

That's right, I had nothing to fear. I had no need to be afraid!

"—The current me is invincible!"

The light which was emitted from the gems of my armour was brighter and more powerful than ever before. The entire observation room was bathed in a red glow, and the shining light became even stronger! I put on my crimson armour once again, and rigorously charged towards Rizevim!

"Ooooooooooooooooooohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

The noise came from the bottom of my chest, and an immensely bright light was released from my gems!

“Rizevim-sama!”

Just as I was about to hit Rizevim, the Champion stood in front of him, and invalidated my attack! Then, Rizevim followed up with an attack, causing my armour to release!

“Die!”

Rizevim kicked me in the abdomen! I was sent flying backwards, and rolled over several times on the floor. …Blood was spurting out from my mouth. …It was insanely painful. It was so painful that I felt as if I would die. —But, the brilliant light from my gems didn’t diminish. A Sacred Gear would respond to the strength of one’s thoughts and desires; if my thoughts became stronger, then my Sacred Gear would also become stronger…! I will fight on for my tou-san, my kaa-san, and Asia! With assistance from Asia’s healing Sacred Gear, my injuries disappeared. Tou-san, kaa-san and Asia were encouraging me

“Ise!”

“Ise!”

“Ise-san!”

…Look, isn’t this powerful? Currently, I was being watched by three members of my family. The radiance from my gems once again burst out with a dazzling light.

“Uuaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhh!”

Without a single drop of fear, I rushed towards Rizevim! The Champion invalidated my attack, and Rizevim used his Sacred Gear Canceller to remove my armour. He then gave me another blow, and it was the same as last time. I was sent flying onto the floor again. Then — the members of my family took action. With the support of tou-san, I stood up from the floor while kaa-san supported my back. And then, the illumination of Asia’s healing light enveloped me.

“Come on, stand up, Ise!”

“Stand up Ise!”

“Ise-san! I’ll heal you!”

Tou-san faced me as he said

“No matter how many times, I’ll help you back up! Because I am — your chichi!”

Okaa-san pat my back as she said

“Give it your best!”

Asia also encouraged me

“Ise-san! Win!”

Ah, I can see it now. This is it. It’s enough if I have them. —As long as I have them, I’ll be able to get back up no matter how many times it is…ah! I had already re-equipped my crimson armour several times, and charged towards the Champion and Rizevim without turning back!

“Oorrryaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Even if the result was the same each and every time, the light which was exuded from my gems still continued to grow more powerful. Even though my stamina was continually drained, and even though my demonic energy was continually exhausted—.

“…Just a bit more, Ise! You can do it! If you’re going to keep going, then I’ll go together with you!”

“Then, I’ll do this together with you kaa-san! We’ll beat these bastards together!”

“I also need to go! Because I am also — a member of the Hyoudou family!”

I was being watched by my family. I was well supported by my family. —So, regardless of how many times I needed to get back up, I had to face them no matter what! Let me look cool for once, after

all, I am in front of my important family.

“…I’m fine. Tou-san, kaa-san, Asia. As long as I have you supporting me, no matter how many times, I will—”

That’s right, no matter how many times, I’ll get up and face them! Rizevim looked at me as I stood back up over and over no matter how many times I was knocked down, and his face was painted with astonishment.

“…Why can that guy still stand up?”

Even if I was knocked down by the attacks of that bastard and the Champion, I didn’t give up on standing back up each time. Even if blood spewed out of my mouth, the bones in my legs were fractured, or my arms were crushed, I didn’t take a single step back; I only continued to advance forward!

“……”

With a twisted expression, Rizevim asked me

“Hey, why can you still get up? Why do you oppose me? …You already exhausted your energy long ago, right? So why do you still stand up?”

While asking me these questions, Rizevim released my armour again, and sent me flying with a kick again. …Even if I was kicked and sent flying, as long as I had my family supporting me, I could continue to get back up…! Seeing this unfold before him, that bastard had an extremely unpleasant look on his face.

“—Damn. ……Why? Why can you still get up!? Why are you able to resist me!?”

Rizevim snarled. Regardless of whether my demonic energy or stamina had been depleted, I still hobbled straight towards him. Even if my entire body was covered with wounds, the light from my Sacred Gear still did not attenuate. Rather, it continued to release a brilliant light. Seeing me in this state, the Champion — relaxed his stance.

“……Rizevim-sama, I can no longer…”

The Champion had a bitter expression on his face. Rizevim became even more agitated.

“Why did you put down your stance!? Get yourself into position! Why would you drop your stance upon seeing someone like that!?”

“……Do you not understand?”

As the Champion lowered his head, it created a stark contrast to Rizevim’s furious expression.

“How is it possible to understand!? It’s the way of thinking of those mere humans!”

Rizevim — turned his attention towards my parents, and then realised all of a sudden.

“I see! Your parents are the driving force behind your power! So that’s how you’re able to fight like that, right!? Well!”

Rizevim’s hand began to glow with a mysterious light.

“Then allow me to kill them!”

It was an extremely powerful wave of demonic energy, and he began to direct it towards my parents! Bad! This is extremely bad! I wanted to run over to protect my parents, but I had already reached the limits of my stamina; my knees buckled, and the wave flew past my body towards them! My parents were going to be hit directly by a wave of demonic energy—!

“Tou-san, kaa-saaaan! Asssiiaaaaa!”

My most important family members disappeared into the luminosity of that wave of demonic energy—. …They didn’t. Rizevim’s demonic energy had been completely scattered. At the same time, a dazzling golden light was emitted from where my parents were! Looking carefully, a shining golden aura was exuded from there, with Asia at the centre. The aura gradually took on the appearance of a dragon. It looked as if a massive dragon was protecting those three people.

“Shit!”

Rizevim swore as he continued to fire numerous bullets of demonic energy! —But, the demonic energy that was released by the son of the Maou was eliminated the instant that it touched the golden aura! The aura was being emitted with Asia in its centre. Asia clasped her hands together in prayer and her eyes were glowing with a golden light as her entire body was shrouded in a golden aura. That aura also seemed like a type of armour. Asia let out tears of awareness, and with a firm expression in her eyes, she said

“Otou-san and okaa-san have me to protect them! I’ll definitely protect them for you to see!”

Behind her — was a golden dragon; even if it had taken the form of an aura, it still fiercely glared at Rizevim. Beholding this sight, Rizevim abruptly shuddered. He hatefully spat these words out

“…Is that actually a Balance Breaker!? Also, that aura is…The Golden Dragon King…! Even if you’ve become like that…you still have to oppose me…!”

That’s right, as Rizevim said, that aura was Fafnir! …That guy, even if he’s become an aura, he still needs to protect Asia? Asia’s Sacred Gear had also responded to indicate that she had attained her Balance Breaker! That is, the Balance Breaker which was born from the union of Asia and Fafnir. Even if it was an attack from the son of the Maou, that absolute defence was able to obliterate them—. Precisely because it was the gentle Asia; perhaps that was the reason why she awakened such an ability.

“……What is that thing? What exactly is it, that thing…!”

Looking at me and Asia, Rizevim could no longer hide his irritation, and was indignantly clutching his hair. With a sorrowful expression, the Champion said

“…Rizevim-sama, they possess something that we do not and are showing it to us.”

Rizevim grabbed the Champion’s chest and bellowed

“That’s why I said, what is that thing!? Love? Is that the thing called love!? Are you stupid!? It’s simply stupidity to the extremes! Those kinds of things are illusions! It’s a stupid lie!”

…You’re wrong, it certainly isn’t any kind of illusion. And it certainly isn’t a lie. The force which is currently driving us is derived from our familial love! Asia is also the same. Yes, she obtained that Balance Breaker by relying on love. Asia and I merely wanted to protect our own family. Seeing the flustered Rizevim, Vali, who had been quietly observing displayed a complicated expression. …That guy Vali was watching us almost silently. …Seeing us as a family, perhaps he also thought of something. However, my energy had already been depleted. …I was already beginning to stagger. If I continued to fight like this, I would eventually fall. Before that, I had to at least have my parents safely return, after all, that was my responsibility. …No, there was another one. Ravel and I had made a promise. I needed to return back with everyone safely. Well, it wouldn’t work out if I died. I made up my mind again. At that time, someone spoke within my mind.

—Ise.

It was a voice which sounded familiar.

—Ise, I was finally able to reach you here.

It was Ophis’ voice. Ophis should currently be sleeping at home, and she should still be unconscious…. Ophis spoke to me.

—Since you can hear my voice, then that must mean you’re finally satisfied.

…Satisfied? What did she mean? While I was still surprised by it, Ddraig seemed to have understood part of what that meant, and laughed. Then, in a voice that everyone could hear, he said

[Son of Lucifer. Grandfather of the Hakuryuukou Vali Lucifer. You will be the first guest.]

“Huh? Guest?”

Rizevim tilted his head in surprise at Ddraig’s words. Ophis

continued to speak to me.

—Ise, sing it along with me.

Ddraig continued to talk to Rizevim

[That's why you should rejoice. Such a chant is not one which you can casually listen to, you definitely need to clean out your ears, and listen with your heart. If you need to ask why, it's because this is a unique chant that a Dragon God has created.]

—My very first friend. The significance of this, teach everyone about it.

Ah, Ophis. I understand. —Let's sing it together. I believed in Ophis, and entrusted my mind and body to her.

"Ophis' voice is inside me. —Let's sing together. —Together, we'll advance."

—In my mind, the chant appeared. I — quietly began to chant

"—The Crimson Red Dragon dwelling within me, awaken from your dominance"

A Crimson glow was emitted from the gem on my right gauntlet.

[—The Crimson Heavenly Dragon I possess within me, rise up to become a King]

Ophis then chanted the next line. At the same time, the gem on my left gauntlet unleashed a jet-black aura.

"—The jet-black God of Infinity"

A crimson aura enveloped my entire body.

[—The glorious Red God of Dreams]

A jet-black aura was encased over it—.

"[Watch over the forbidden existence we shall become that transcends the boundaries]"

My crimson armour was melded with a jet-black colour, and further

changes then occurred. My gauntlets, greaves, breastplate, wings had the colour of crimson and black fused together, and their shape also changed. Then, Ophis and I sang the final verse at the same time.

“[—We shall dance like radiance within the inferno!]”

“<<[ D∞D !! D∞D D∞D !! D∞D D∞D D∞D !!!! D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D !!!!!! D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D !!!!!!!! ] >>” [12]

All of the gems resounded with a voice which permeated through to the soul. A ∞ symbol emerged on all of the gems!

“[ <<Dragon ∞ Drive !!!!!!>> ]” [13]

Ddraig’s and Ophis’ voices amalgamated with each other as they echoed out from the gems. The chant with Ophis and me ended. ……. …Currently, standing in front of Rizevim was something which felt more organic than the crimson armour; it was a full-body, crimson and black plate armour. There were now four wings, and equipped within them were cannons. Rizevim was astounded by this sight, and he kept shaking his head as he shouted

“Juggernaut Drive!? No, that’s completely wrong! Although it has the same organic change as the Juggernaut Drive, that ominous aura can’t be felt at all. Rather, the aura which rises out of its skin is…!”

Indeed, this wasn’t the Juggernaut Drive. But it did have the organic characteristic of Juggernaut Drive. Rizevim’s whole face was distorted.

“…What kind of a joke is this, this kind of thing? You’ve already reached this stage, yet you were still able to evolve…!”

Ddraig declared to Rizevim

[—Dragon Deification. This is the absolute power that only Ophis can bestow.]

“—So the reason is because you’ve obtained the power of Ophis!”

What he said was correct. Currently — I had been saved by Ophis' power. Presently, my body was re-constructed from the flesh of Great Red and Ophis' power. Right now, Ophis' power had been temporarily released. Precisely because the foundation of my body was Great Red's flesh, I was able to withstand Ophis' power. Only because I was constituted by two dragons could I obtain this forbidden power—. Ophis spoke within me

—Ise, this state can only be maintained for a very short amount of time.

I see, I only had a very brief amount of time. That could be a few seconds, tens of seconds, or even a few minutes. Regardless of that, it wasn't long. —That's because my body was already screaming out. There was a strange power circulating around inside my body. It felt as though my body would be torn apart if I moved even just a little bit. Well, I should hurry up and do something. Right now, I — could definitely do it. I readied my stance as I faced Rizevim. After preparing my stance, I only took a slight step forward. All of a sudden, I had shortened our distance, and was standing directly in front of Rizevim. That bastard didn't even react. My movements just now were completely beyond his comprehension. I clenched my right fist, and punched him straight in the face. At this time, a voice rang out.

" <<[ D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D !!!!!!!!]>> "

Rizevim intended to use his left hand to grab my fist! The wings of Lucifer on his back all expanded, and increased his strength. In order to block my fist, Rizevim used his Canceller…. I didn't use [Penetrate], but the momentum of my fist didn't weaken, and the aura enveloping it wasn't eliminated; Rizevim cried out in surprise 'what is this!?'

"First is a punch!"

Using my fist's momentum, I drove a direct punch towards Rizevim! Struck by that single blow, that bastard was flung onto the ground. Despite that, Rizevim immediately stood back up, and felt the part of his face that had been hit. From the looks of it, that blow just now

was pretty good; his nasal bridge had been knocked crooked, and he had an incessant nosebleed. After Rizevim forcefully pushed his nose back into place and stopped the bleeding, he glared at me.

"……What the fuck was that just then? Why wasn't it invalidated!? Did my ability not work!? How is that possible!?"

In response to Rizevim who was in pure disbelief, Ddraig began to speak

[No, son of Lucifer. Your ability did work.]

"Well, why wasn't it cancelled then!? Even if that power has a share of Ophis' power, as long as it's the power of a Sacred Gear, my Sacred Gear Canceller should still be able to disable it, right!?"

[It's extremely simple. Your ability to cancel is limited. Over here, the power of the Sekiryuutei's ability is infinite. Since it's a power which can't entirely be cancelled — that would make things different, wouldn't it?]

Ddraig's remark left Rizevim stunned

"…To actually say that the power which was released is one which can't be completely eliminated by my Canceller…!"

[That is Ophis — the so-called infinite.]

After hearing Ddraig's reply, Rizevim regretfully laughed.

"…That's basically cheating…!"

That's right, this was basically cheating. I wouldn't want to use this power in a fair fight. Also, to borrow such a power from Ophis who only wants to live a peaceful life…I would be reluctant.

"It's really simple isn't it? It uses power to eliminate everything. It's very much like what I'd do. As you said, this is the cheat which you've obtained by borrowing Ophis' power. But, do you think you can protect everyone just by defeating me?"

I only needed to hit this bastard, so borrowing it a bit was fine! Facing such an outcome, Rizevim retreated a step, and revealed a

nasty smile.

“However, from the looks of it, it doesn’t seem like you can maintain that for long. Since that’s the case—”

Seeing through my situation, that bastard shifted his hand into a chest pocket.

“I’ll just drag this battle out. I’ve got many Tears.”

What he took out was a small vial which had Phoenix Tears inside them. Rizevim opened up the bottle.

“Now then, I’ll use the first bottle.”

He then continued to drink it. —Damn it! He planned on healing his injuries! It doesn’t matter. Even if I can’t maintain this state for long, I’ll fight with everything I have before the time limit is up! Once again, I mentally prepared myself and made up my mind…but nothing happened even after Rizevim swallowed the Phoenix Tears.

“……”

He didn’t start to recover, and Rizevim frowned.

“…What’s going on? Why haven’t any of my injuries healed?”

The Champion quietly muttered. —A small magic circle was created in his hands.

“…Indeed, this is reality. But, it’s already reached this point.”

Rizevim, who immediately grasped the meaning of these words, stared at the Champion.

“…You’re the bastard who invalidated them…? You completely invalidated the effects of the Phoenix Tears?”

“…Originally, the Belials’ ability [Worthless] could only be used against an opponent’s ability. —But, ‘objects’ are not an exception. …As long I know about its form and substance, it can become [Worthless]. All of the Tears that you hold have already been made [Worthless].”

So that could also work huh…. As long as he knew how it worked, his ability could be used. In this situation, because he knew about the composition of the Phoenix Tears, he was able to invalidate the healing effect. Understanding all of this, Rizevim clutched all of the bottles of Tears in his hand.

"…Since the battle against the House of Phoenix; you were already expecting this from the very beginning!"

I see, so that's how it was! This is what Beelzebub-sama was talking about! The Champion knew that Qlippoth were secretly producing Phoenix Tears from the beginning. In order to invalidate them, he planned to analyse them during the match with Raiser. In other words, he was able to analyse Ravel and Raiser's demonic energy, and learned about the composition of the Tears. He was then able to invalidate all of the Tears that Qlippoth had.

"You even meddled in Qlippoth's affairs, you boy…!"

Rizevim vented his dissatisfaction and anger. His face had become distorted in anger. All of this was beyond his expectations. Seeing him like that, I laughed.

"When you confronted Michael-san in Heaven, I thought that you were indeed the son of the Maou Lucifer, and I was somewhat fearful."

I expected him to become imposing; when he opened his wings of Lucifer in Heaven, I feared him. But — I was wrong. It was the same as what Vali just said; this is what that bastard's true nature was like. He was just a clownish ossan.

"—You're not being very brave by imitating your chichi are you, ossan? Your current demeanour is your original attitude, isn't it?"

I didn't fear him in the slightest, and said that to him face to face.

"—I'm not a pretentious and hypocritical seventeen year old kid, you know? If I'm an ossan, then what are you?"

"…I'm known as the Sekiryuutei!"

Because of a single thing that I had said, he could no longer hide the anxiety in his heart. He emitted light from his hand as he released demonic energy, and all of the wings of Lucifer on his back opened up! I borrowed Ophis' power, and prepared a full powered attack against Rizevim. I would determine the winner of this battle here! Since I had the addition of Ophis' power, it was possible! I would get rid of this bastard right here! In the observation room, Rizevim and I began to fight, and as we fought, we flew out of the glass wall that had Vali smashed through! Whilst in mid-air, I opened my wings and began charging demonic energy for a cannon attack! I narrowed our distance, and then began fighting in close-combat again! My punches and his kicks each hit each other's body! The aftermath of these clashes generated shockwaves which caused the surrounding buildings to crumble, and even the mass-produced Evil Dragons which were flying about in the air dropped out of the sky rapidly. I once again realised that this bastard's strength was extraordinary!

"Oryaaaaaaahhhhh!"

All of Rizevim's wings had been rolled up, and they were then swung down towards me! The sharp end of the wings was thrust towards me, but I evaded them at high speed. However, the impact of his wings caused all of the building and roads below to be destroyed.

"Nuraaaaaarrgghhhhhhh!"

This time, he released several extremely large shots of demonic energy! Both the intensity and aggression of his demonic energy were incredible; I would have been fatally injured even if I was wearing my crimson armour. But — right now, I had the extra protection of Ophis' power!

"Haaaaaaaaaahhhh!"

The massive bullets of highly dense demonic energy which came towards me were all deflected by my punches and kicks! Of the bullets of demonic energy that I deflected, some went down to the streets or buildings of Agreas, and some were sent even further away. The moment that they landed, enormous explosions occurred in various places. The resulting gusts of wind swept away everything in the surrounding area. At the impacted place that was nearest to

where I was, several buildings had been reduced to dust or nothingness, and a massive crater had formed. Although it was incredibly destructive, this was the Maou's son after all. —That was what I thought. …He was on the level of a Super Devil? Of course it was impossible. The silent pressure and absolute aura that could be felt from Sirzechs-sama and Ajuka-sama; this bastard couldn't be compared to those two Maou-sama at all. I thought that among these three Super Devils, wasn't this bastard a few levels below those other guys? I couldn't help thinking that…but, he would be the same brutal enemy regardless. The wings on Rizevim's back were all swung at once, and a powerful aura burst out of his body. With that, he flew above me, and shouted!

"Eh! Well! Let me give you something massive as a return gift! Your nakama are below, right? If you evade this, then they'll die won't they!? Even if you're able to destroy this, your family members in the Government Office will all be killed by the aftershock!"

After Rizevim shouted like that, he gathered an unimaginably overwhelming aura in both of his hands! An incredible amount of demonic energy emerged from his hands. Appearing above his head — was an incredible ball of demonic energy more than ten metres in width. There were also six of them! If these things were to hit the surface of Agreas — not to mention my nakama, the whole city would be destroyed! The six balls of demonic energy gradually circled around.

"—DISSAAAPPPPEEAARRRR!"

Rizevim bellowed out as he unleashed his attack! An immense pressure and a massive amount of demonic energy descended from the sky! I — prepared myself, and then said to Ddraig

"—Accompany me to the end, Ddraig!"

[Of course, this was already decided on!]

I aimed the cannons embedded in my four wings in front of me! There were two above my shoulders, and two under my armpits; the barrel of the cannons widened! The infinite power of Ophis was concentrated into the cannons.

“[<<D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D !!!!!!!!>>]”

A [∞] symbol emerged on every one of my gems, and they alternated with flashes of red and black light. DOOOO…the cannons were charging up. Ophis — The Dragon God of Infinity’s power was being focused.

“GOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

“<<[∞ Blaster !!!!!!]>>”

Along with my voice, the thick and intense cannon attack which was a combination of crimson and jet-black aura was fired from the muzzle of the four cannons at once! The blast from the four cannons and Rizevim’s six demonic energy spheres collided with each other. Then—. A massive explosion engulfed the sky above the floating city of Agreas. Booming, explosive sounds, strong winds, and all kinds of other phenomenon occurred. My cannon blast and Rizevim’s demonic energy were eliminating each other in the sky! All of the windows in Agreas were completely shattered by the shockwaves which were produced—. —The sky turned into a field of red and black interwoven together. Those two extremely large and powerful attacks clashed with each other, and then annihilated each other. Amidst the smoke which was generated by the explosion, the figure of a person could be seen. —It was Rizevim. But, because he just withstood the impact of that explosion, more than half of his wings were damaged, and blood was dripping out of every part of his body. Blood was seeping out of his ears, nose and mouth. Flying also seemed very strenuous for him. In contrast to him, I was completely unharmed. Seeing that I hadn’t suffered any damage, Rizevim’s expression was intertwined with anger and unease.

“…Could it be that I’ll end up like how Shalba and Cao Cao did, being defeated by you like this…!?”

Hearing this, Ddraig was also slightly surprised, and he then said

[—Shouldn’t you have known when you got involved? My partner — Hyoudou Issei has always been in pursuit of peace and quiet. But, whether it’s that descendent of the old Beelzebub, the leader of the

Hero Faction, or even you, the son of Lucifer, you've all trampled over that which should not without a shred of hesitation.]

Ddraig then asserted

[Well, there is no choice but destruction, right? —This is the Sekiryuutei of the Two Heavenly Dragons. …No, this is something a bit different. This is something slightly different from the Two Heavenly Dragons, it should be known as the Cardinal Crimson Promotion[141]— [ Diabolos Dragon][151]. ]

Being known as the reincarnated Devil the Crimson Sekiryuutei — [Diabolos Dragon], It was actually somewhat embarrassing. Hearing what Ddraig said, Rizevim laughed.

"…Kukuku, so you've become the new Super Devil [Dragon Maou]. …In that case, I wonder if my grandson will become a Super Devil before long."

After saying that, behind that bastard — a transportation magic circle was created!

"…But, I will not die here…I will take my leave!"

Bastard! He planned to escape! After Rizevim glanced at me, he immediately faded into the light of transportation! Damn it! He's faster at running away than anyone else! But, it was still too early to give up!

"I won't let you get away, Rizevim!"

Vali flew out from the Government Office. —Then, he glanced back at me and said

"—Impressive. Hyoudou Issei. You, fighting for your family…I was captivated by it."

After saying that, Vali chased after Rizevim who had disappeared in the sky of Agreas. …Vali, there seemed to be a slightly lonely expression on his face.

# Part 6

After Rizevim escaped, I returned to the observation room to confirm the safety of my parents and Asia. I released Ophis' armour, and returned to my normal appearance. Well, although I had already returned to the observation room…. I walked over to the Champion who was hanging his head in the middle of the room. It seemed like he no longer had any intention of resisting. I faced him as I said

"…Champion, what you've done is unforgiveable."

After I said that, the Champion opened his arms and closed his eyes.

"Dispose of me as you like. You have the right to do so."

……Kill me, that's what he meant. Something like that…how could I possibly do that? —But, kaa-san quickly ran over. She slapped the Champion's face.

"…To let my family's children, to allow my family's children to suffer such things, this is considered a small price to pay."

Kaa-san was very dignified—. It caused tou-san to say 'waaah' on the side in surprise. I also had to give the Champion a punch at the very least. But since kaa-san took that away…well so be it. The Champion sincerely apologised to kaa-san 'I'm very sorry'. …I shook my head and said

"…No matter how many years, or even thousands of years you spend, please atone for your sins. …The girl that I love has said that she wants to compete with you. …Having a Game against you as their dream, surely it wouldn't just be Rias. There are a lot of contestants who also have this dream."

That's right, it wasn't just Rias. Sairaorg-san and Sona-zenkaichou also dreamed of competing against this man in the future. Also—.

"…Even me, I'll have my own peerage one day, and I want to have a good match with you. So…regardless of how many years it is, I'll

wait, so please atone for your sins.”

“……Even so, you said that I actually can’t die. …You’re truly crueller than anyone else.”

With a frown on his face, the Champion continued to ask me

“…There is one thing, please tell me. I’ve heard rumours. …You met Yaegaki-san and Cleria’s soul in Heaven. …Cleria, she…what was her expression like?”

I recalled the ghost which appeared to be Cleria-san when I was in Heaven. Cleria-san was tightly embracing Yaegaki.

“…She had a very gentle expression.”

After hearing my words, the Champion let out a stream of tears.

“……I see……I’ve lost.”

Seeing the dispirited Champion sit down, I couldn’t help looking at the sky. …This was a battle which couldn’t have been predicted. It wasn’t that I couldn’t understand the Champion’s reasoning. But, it was a fact that he overstepped the boundaries that he shouldn’t have—. But, to me, my gains were large. I — looked back at my family. My tou-san, my kaa-san, and Asia. They were all my important family members. Everyone now smiled together. There was no longer a need to hide anything. But, it was possible that it would place my parents in danger. —In that case, together with Asia, together with my nakama, it’ll be fine if we protect them. It’ll be fine if we do our best to protect them. I reaffirmed my determination to fight in order to protect the people important to me—. —Suddenly, I was attacked by a bout of nausea. I immediately covered my mouth. Deep in my throat — something was coming up from my abdomen that I couldn’t even hold back with my hand. …When I noticed, I was already coughing up large amounts of blood from my mouth. There was also something warm running out of my nose. I understood that it was a nosebleed. I suddenly felt weak and sensed that I had lost all of my energy—. My body collapsed, and I fell onto the floor.

“…Huh?”

I could only look at the floor…I didn't even have the strength to lift a finger, I couldn't move at all. I could only look at the floor which was dyed red by the blood which had spurted out of my mouth.

"Ise-san!?"

"Ise!"

"Ise!"

The cries of Asia, tou-san, and kaa-san made its way into my ears… but the noise gradually became more distant from me….

[…Partner. —This is the price of power. Ophis' power…is really too…]

Although I could hear Ddraig's concerned voice…everything in front of my eyes slowly turned to white, and then became dark…. After that, my consciousness receded—. Indeed, the price really is too—.

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**Notes**

1. ogifu-sama and ogibo-sama are respectful ways of calling/addressing father-in-law and mother-in-law.

2. osofu-sama is a respectful way of addressing a grandfather.

3. Kana was Ouroboros Dragon, kanji was Infinite Dragon God.

4. Sandanzuki (三段突き) roughly translates to: three piece/stage thrust. It was a one of Okita Sōji's signature techniques.

5. Okita Sōji was the captain of the first unit of the Shinsengumi, a special police force formed to protect the Shogunate representatives during the final years of the Edo period (1864-1869) when the Tokugawa Shogunate ended.

6. Kana was Gigantis Dragon Princess, the kanji was Princess of the Golden Dragon-kun.

7. fusai means and can be used to refer to a married couple.

8. Lilin: Known in mythology as night spirits which attack men. Sometimes

referred to as the daughter of Lilith – first wife of Adam, and later Lucifer.

9. –shi: A formal honorific used to refer to someone who is unfamiliar or not well known by the speaker.

10. Hyakudomairi: Japanese Shintoism. It is said that after walking back and forth between two fixed points in a shrine and praying 100 times, a wish will come true.

11. The name Issei has the meaning of sincere/honest.

12. It would be pronounced: Dee Dee.

13. Except for when ∞ is used in D∞D, it can be replaced with Infinity e.g. Dragon Infinity Drive.

14. Kanji was Crimson Sekiryuutei, kana was Cardinal Crimson Promotion.

15. Kanji was D x D, kana was Diabolos Dragon.

# Last Life... Poetic Justice

"…"

"…"

I — Azazel, have infiltrated the interior of Agreas, and have also successfully arrived at the rear area, but a girl dressed in a black gothic style dress was now standing before me. That girl was standing in front of the two great iron doors to the power room as she waited. In front of me was an extremely wide open space. — The girl who was waiting there was Ophis' spawn, Lilith. It really wouldn't be very good for me to fight against her. Moreover, if I actually did attack, I would be easily defeated. Having said that, I do have work to do on the power generator behind…. Because a map of Agreas was prepared in advance, things had gone smoothly since I infiltrated this place. Although there were traps laid by the enemy on the way here, they were meaningless against a trap lifting specialist like me. Sure enough, it was right for me to come here alone. If I was with other people, a lot of time certainly would have been wasted with the traps. I stood in front of Lilith and scratched my cheek with one finger.

"…Hey, you really won't let me through huh?"

"Impossible. Rizevim said, here, Lilith has to defend it."

"Is it impossible not to fight?"

"Fight? Lilith, strong. Very strong."

“…Well, it’s as you say.”

Lilith quickly extended and retracted a cute punch. The gesture was rather cute, but I was afraid that every single blow contained an extraordinary amount of power. Ah, this was truly a problem. What should I do? At a time like this, Ise would be particularly useful…. After all, he is really popular with children. And if it was Asia, what would happen then? Given that she’s such a rare dragon tamer who was originally a nun, if it was Asia, I wonder what she would do against this dragon? …Thinking about that, I suddenly had an idea. I took out a bar of chocolate from my pocket which I had brought along as an emergency food supply. I tore off the packaging, and then exposed the chocolate bar. I extended it towards Lilith.

“Well, I’ll give you a snack.”

“—Mmn!”

As soon as she spotted the snack, her expression completely changed! Mmn! Ophis also had a poor resistance against snacks, so could it be that it was the same for this spawn? I moved the chocolate bar around, up, down, left and right. Lilith’s eyes followed it as it moved. From the looks of it, she was very interested in it. Speaking of which, Ise and the others had met this girl in the town of the Tepes faction, and they also entertained her with a nice meal. … Were dragons greedy?

“Do you want to eat it? It’s very tasty and sweet, you know?”

As soon as I said that, she silently and expressionlessly swallowed.

“……”

Her eyes were spinning about chaotically. You’re making me feel as though I’m doing something bad here!

“…If you let me pass, I’ll let you eat this. If you don’t let me, then you don’t eat. So, do you want to eat it?”

“…Want. But, can’t let you pass. …Lilith, what to do?”

The girl tilted her head very cutely as she answered me. …What

should be done in the end?

I sighed. …So I really won’t be able to pass. I extended the chocolate bar in my hand towards Lilith.

“…You don’t need to look at me with eyes like that. I know, I know alrerady. Anyway, I’m giving it to you. You can think about whether you’ll let me pass after you eat it.”

Lilith received it.

“……”

She silently placed the chocolate bar into her mouth. …She appeared to be very satisfied. I then lowered my head, and held both my hands up. Well, what should be done next? By using snacks as bait, would that be able to lure her away from here? This approach could be quite easy…she is unexpectedly very stubborn.

“…Really, that bastard who made you turned you into this without thinking about anything at all.”

Well, there isn’t much time left. I was currently considering my strategy in front of this dragon girl. Folding my arms, I nodded my head as I thought of different battle plans. At that time, the sound of someone’s footsteps was heard from the corridor that I came from. After a short while, even a voice could be heard.

“……Damn it! That shitty Sekiryuutei brat…!”

Emerging from the corridor while saying that was — that bastard Rizevim, with a ragged look! He, with his head down was muttering and grumbling to himself.

“I really should use Lilith’s power…. No, there’s too much uncertainty so she can only be my shield. If the current Lilith encountered the Two Heavenly Dragons, she may even be killed. Precisely because of this, it was necessary to strengthen and re-adjust her by examining the real one…. …Well, I can only use that then. … Uhehehehe.”

After the sound of his unpleasant laughter, he cried out.

“Lilith! Lilith, where are you!?”

Whilst calling for Lilith, that bastard finally noticed me.

“I was just thinking that my time was running out, and now you show

up.”

I laughed at the state of Rizevim body. That bastard didn’t intend to lose to my wicked laughter and returned a grin at me.

“…Oh – oh – if it isn’t Azazel-ojisan? Of course it was you, to get to the power generation room of Agreas first. And of course you were also able to avoid all of the traps on the way here.”

“Truly, you deserve it, Rizevim. To be beaten by Ise and Vali like that. Well, I predicted that it would turn out like this anyway.”

“…To see such an outcome and not be surprised, you are indeed the guiding hand who directs the Two Heavenly Dragons.”

Comparing Ise and Vali to their predecessors, their strength has been rising rapidly and unexpectedly. I couldn’t help thinking that it would one day become like this.

“Regardless of how powerful they are, the people who cause trouble in front of them always have unexpected events occur, and they’re eventually eliminated. For you, that may eventually be the case. It’s just a matter of time. But I put a lot of effort into calculating and minimising our losses that would be caused by you.”

Regardless of whether it was Shalba or Cao Cao, both of them caused some kind of trouble, and were then eliminated. If there’s a first time, then there’ll be a second time, which is why the thought that Rizevim would end up like this naturally became stronger and stronger. Rizevim’s mouth bent into a crooked shape, and he had a look of displeasure.

“…Your words are truly infuriating.”

“No, it seems your malice still exceeds some of my expectations. You have both the Holy Grail and the Forbidden Fruit. However, you’re too impatient. Reaching this point, it isn’t an exaggeration to say that you seem too eager to make this sudden move. Could it be that this is related to the dark eye circles on your face?”

He had dark circles around his eyes. A lack of sleep? For a political agitator like him, is there such a thing that could cause him to lose

sleep? Besides, he isn't the type of person to toss and turn uneasily at night just because the path ahead was uncertain. —But contrary to my expectations, he laughed to himself again.

"…Surprisingly, I'm also a delicate person. …Ah, damn it. You were actually thinking of the same thing as me. The most troublesome is not Sirzechs, nor is it the Sekiryuutei or Vali and their kind, and neither is it [DxD]. …But the one in front of me…"

Rizevim narrowed his eyes, and then eloquently stared at me. … Even after suffering such heavy injuries, what was he trying to play at? Just when I had a question to ask — a flash of bright light suddenly appeared within my field of vision. With a closer look, as the entire vast open space was illuminated by that bright light – a Dragon Gate opened! There were also two of them! Both of them were mainly black in colour. Appearing from there was — a colossal winged and three-headed black dragon, as well as a handsome brown-skinned youth who was wearing black vestments. The colossal black dragon with three heads was the [Diabolism Thousand Dragon][111] — Aži Dahāka. Although the brown-skinned youth emerged in the form of a human, I was afraid that he was the [Eclipse Dragon][121] — Apophis. The youth — Apophis said towards Rizevim with a surprised expression

<<—Your methods are too naïve, Prince.>>

The three-headed dragon — Aži Dahāka then laughed.

[It would be better to say that your mental weakness actually brought you here.]

[Mental strength like that of tofu!]

[All you've got is an arrogant attitude!]

Right after the middle head spoke, the heads on the left and right sides began to mock Rizevim. In the face of the two Evil Dragons who were renowned and powerful, Rizevim smiled wryly again.

"……Well if it isn't Apophis-kun and Aži Dahāka-kun."

Upon seeing Rizevim's injuries, Aži Dahāka ridiculed him with even

more pleasure.

[Ah—, Rize. You don't look too bad as a salty plum right now.]

[You really look magnificent ☆]

[Ha serves you right!]

Aži Dahāka's attitude caused Rizevim's anger to flare up. But, it was interrupted from the side by Apophis.

<<Sorry, Prince Rizevim. Despite a lot of your care…it ends here. — From here on, allow us to act on our own.>>

Apophis extended one hand forward, and then created a magic circle. A certain object then appeared from the centre of it. —A single cup, it was Valerie's Holy Grail.

<<I'll be taking this away with me.>>

"…The Holy Grail huh. I was hiding that in my own dimensional space…you guys asked about that before but now this is how it is."

Aži Dahāka 'kukuku' laughed.

[That's fine. As long as it's within the scope of magic, I'm better when compared to you.]

[I'm very good at powerful magic yo ☆]

[You second-rate Maou! Third-rate Maou!]

…That bastard Rizevim, he was being betrayed at such a time. These guys, did they believe that Rizevim was likely to fail in the near future, and were wondering when to rebel? Thus, they took aim at this opportunity, and also took the Holy Grail. As if in response to my deductions, Apophis said

<<As a result of Fafnir's curse, you experienced nightmares every night. Those dark circles around your eyes are too severe. In order to strengthen Lilith, you eventually became too anxious about preparing the plans for implementation. Even if you are known as a Super Devil, comparing you to the other two Super Devils, the difference is more than just one or two points.>>

“……You really know how to talk, Evil Dragon.”

Rizevim aggressively retorted. …I finally understood. It was that; that bastard Rizevim was suffering from Fafnir’s curse. That Dragon King, in the final moments before he lost consciousness, he turned his own spirit into a curse, and sent it into Rizevim. Moreover, Fafnir’s spiritual body appeared in Rizevim’s dreams every night, and he repeatedly attacked him in his dreams. Rizevim’s dark eye circles were caused by the attacks of Fafnir every night—. So that was the reason why he targeted Ophis. In order to defeat Fafnir, he planned to strengthen Lilith. Aži Dahāka’s mockery of Rizevim intensified even further.

[Super Devil-sama had no resistance in his dreams, so hundreds and thousands of times over and over he was killed by that golden guy.]

[He was completely unable to transcend[131] in his dreams!]

[He simply couldn’t release the curse within his dreams!]

Apophis sighed.

<<And because he himself was being tormented, it caused him to become the stumbling block of his own plan; one can imagine the degree of his mental strength. It’s a fact that the curse was too strong for him. After all, he made a move against many unnecessary things.>>

It really suited his style, everything that he said was correct. After inciting so many people, in the end he shot himself in the foot. And he was also hunted down and cornered mentally. This lead to a series of mistakes occurring, which were really self-inflicted. This was the result of underestimating the opponent too much. Having been mocked utterly by these two Evil Dragons, Rizevim was trembling with anger. I ignored Rizevim, and said to the two Evil Dragons

“Do you think you could give that, the Holy Grail to me, Apophis, Aži Dahāka?”

<<Naturally that is impossible, leader of the Fallen Angels. We are

also quite interested in attacking another world.>>

—What! …How could this? I only considered what Rizevim was thinking, and I didn't think that these guys would be so interested in another world! After Apophis spoke, Aži Dahāka continued

[Going to fight the god of another world is very interesting.]

[It's so very exciting ☆]

[I really want to take a look at a world that's never been seen!]

Only their objective was the same. But, they had now severed their ties with Rizevim. In this case though, it's still a troublesome matter. The thought of these powerful dragons recklessly using the Holy Grail was terrifying. Suddenly, Apophis turned his eyes towards the corridor. He continued to stare at the dark and silent corridor, and then made a slight smile.

<<…It seems that a person has come for your soul. So goodbye for now, son of the Maou. It'll be good if you die without any worries.>>

An illumination of light appeared beneath the feet of Apophis and Aži Dahāka, and the Dragon Gate opened once again.

[However, we will inherit your vision.]

[Bye bye!]

[Have a miserable death!]

Leaving these words behind, Apophis and Aži Dahāka transported themselves away from here along with a black coloured aura—. Just after the two ferocious Evil Dragons had left, a flash of silver light like the slash of a sword appeared in the depths of the corridor, and drew near. Flying down into this vast space was — Vali, whose entire body was encased in pure white armour.

"The aura I felt just now was Aži Dahāka. —It seems that the Evil Dragons that you revived dislike you."

He said that as he stood in front of Rizevim. Rizevim could only smile wryly at the advent of his grandson.

“—Now it’s time for Vali-kun’s appearance.”

“That three-headed Evil Dragon and Crom Cruach aren’t people who can be controlled by someone of your calibre, you’re still too naïve. —You can never underestimate Dragons, Rizevim.”

Vali stretched out his right hand, and gathered a great and dangerous amount of aura in it. Seeing this, Rizevim began to smile apologetically.

“Ah wait, Vali-kun, I was wrong…you see, I’m your grandfather aren’t I? Have a little mercy on me.”

Due to his current injuries, he realised that he was unable to hold up against the power of Vali. At that moment, that bastard began to get nervous. —But.

“……”

Vali quietly exhaled, and then began chanting the words to unleash his power.

“I, who is about to awaken — am the Hakuryuukou who will take the law down to the darkness—”

The space we were in began to shake violently. An enormous amount of aura was being released from Vali’s body. The pure white armour gradually changed into brilliant silver, and its shape also changed. Vali only had one response — to recite the chant for [Empireo Juggernaut Overdrive] [141]. Although both physical and demonic energy would be consumed immensely, the power obtained could easily kill even one of the most powerful Grim Reapers of legend [151]. —It was a formidable power which could even make the killing of a god possible. Seeing this scene, Rizevim’s eyes widened, and he continued to try persuading Vali.

“These days, one of the necessary skills for young people is to care for the elderly, right?”

“I walk the road of domination with infinite destruction and by piercing through the imaginary dream—”

Vali took no notice and continued to recite the chant. Rizevim put on a pretentious pose and began to apologise.

“Ah—, I understand now! I admit that everything I’ve done until now is wrong! Bullying you all is my fault!”

“I shall become a pure Emperor of Dragon—”

“Hey hey, it’s all my fault! Whether it’s money or a beautiful woman, whatever you want, I’ll give it to you, okay?”

However, the grandson faced his grandfather without a trace of compassion, and finished the last line of the chant in a single breath —.

[[[[[“And I shall have you obey the silvery-white illusions and the perfect evil ways!”]]]]]

[Juggernaut Over Drive!!!!!!!!!!!!]

The sound rang out from all of the gems. Eventually, the Divine Dividing Scale Mail changed into a great armour which released a white-silver glow. Releasing a silver aura and a murderous intent from his entire body, that was Vali’s Juggernaut Overdrive. In a fight against Rizevim under normal circumstances, he would be defeated due to the incredible consumption of energy and a protracted battle. But, it was another matter right now as Rizevim was both injured and did not have much strength remaining. With Vali’s strength at this level, the possibility of defeating Rizevim was extremely high. For example, by using a sword created without the power of a Sacred Gear, but simply from the power of magic and demonic energy, it would be possible to cut him. Vali was a genius who could even learn Norse magic, and he was also very talented at magic. Even if a direct attack with the power of his Sacred Gear was ineffective, his physical abilities were greatly enhanced by Juggernaut Overdrive, so he would have a massive advantage against Rizevim in a head-on fight. Rizevim, who realised this point, still continued to smile while trying to persuade him. He even tried pleading to me.

“Azazel! What do you want then!? Regardless of whether it’s money or something else that I can give—”

He wasn't able to finish his words before I interrupted him.

"Rizevim, you really are the worst. At the very least, you should die honourably at the hands of the Sekiryuutei or the Hakuryuukou that is your grandson."

At this point, it was actually…rather pathetic. The son of Lucifer, who had incited all kinds of people, was now begging for his life in front of us. Moreover, it was towards the opponents that he had been fighting against the whole time. Seeing him this way, let alone pity, I was simply amazed. Vali released the gauntlet on his right hand, and then created a sword with magic. It was a magic sword which didn't have the power of a Sacred Gear added to it. While pointing the tip of the sword towards Rizevim, Vali said

"You're wrong, Azazel. This guy — he was just defeated by a very ordinary human family. …The thing that I don't possess, Hyoudou Issei does. …For this guy, that is where how he lost above."

…Hearing this from him, it wasn't difficult to imagine the scene of the battle which occurred above. …I see, Ise, you've let your parents know about your true identity now. Yet, your parents still accepted you. You must be truly happy. You must have been trembling with joy. Such a thing happened; it wasn't difficult to imagine that kid excitedly allowing the Sacred Gear's power to explode. A Sacred Gear would, after all, continue to become stronger and stronger along with its user's feelings. —Rizevim was cornered by the love of the Hyoudou family. Both his birth and upbringing was that of an ordinary teenager. Neither of his parents possessed any special ability, they were common, ordinary people. What was generated from the very ordinary life of this family—. It was something that Rizevim could not possibly understand. …And also the thing that Vali desired. That was why it led to his defeat. …How ironic, Rizevim.

"……No no, how can this be?"

Rizevim didn't seem to understand Vali's words, and then began to cry out

"Liiillliiiiith! Lilith-chan! Hurry up and protect me!"

He was calling Lilith! After Lilith, who was intently watching us from the door heard Rizevim's call, she went towards him.

"Protect, Rizevim?"

After seeing Lilith make a stance to protect him, Rizevim once again revealed an extremely wicked smile.

"Yes, that's right! Come and protect me! You need to hang on to me! Guard me! Use the power of Infinity to bury that Hakuryuukou and Fallen Angel! Hyahyahyahyahyahyahya!"

Since he now had Lilith as a shield, the situation had quickly turned around and a nasty smile resurfaced on Rizevim's face. Vali confronted Lilith, and in a soft voice said to her

"Spawn of Ophis, could you step aside? I…do not want to attack you. Is protecting the guy behind you the purpose of your existence?"

Vali was also the same as Ise, and still attached great importance to Ophis. That was why Lilith was presently of equal importance. Lilith seemed to be slightly puzzled by Vali's gentle words. It was the same as that time with Ise, perhaps only when conversing with the Two Heavenly Dragons, her emotions would function?

"But, Lilith. Have to protect, Rizevim. My job."

While staying behind her, Rizevim nodded in agreement.

"That's right, it's your job! It's your job! You're really a good child, Lilith-chan! You're worthy of having my mother's name!"

…He had quickly reverted back to his usual self. What incredible trash, Rizevim. However, Vali spoke even more calmly.

"Well, come with me. —If you come with me, you'll be able to see Great Red as well as another you, you'll be able to meet Ophis. … Hyoudou Issei, you'll also be able to see the Sekiryuutei."

Great Red, Ise — the name of the Sekiryuutei as well as Ophis had been announced, and Lilith displayed a reaction which was different to any other that she had shown before.

“…Great, Red? Another…Lilith?”

Vali pointed to the dragon shaped accessory which was on Lilith’s dress.

“You only have that right? If it was that man, he would definitely give you something better. It would definitely be hundreds of times better than what you have there—”

In order to interrupt Vali’s persuasion, Rizevim shouted out

“Heeyy! Hey hey hey hey! What is this, are you trying to have a policy of appeasement!? This is my Lilith! And my dedicated ace! To be able to do this right now, I had to shape her attitude —”

I sighed, then took out a chocolate bar from my pocket again and said to Lilith

“Right now, I’ll also give you snacks okay?”

“……Great Red, another Lilith…Sekiryuutei…snacks…Great Red, snacks, another Lilith, snacks…snacks with the Sekiryuutei…”

Ooh, knowing about Great Red, Ophis, and the Two Heavenly Dragons who would give her snacks, Lilith was becoming lost in confusion. She really was a cute little one. Comparing her to Rizevim, she really was cute and easy to understand. Lilith truly was a valuable existence. Seeing that Lilith had become confused because of us, Rizevim became anxious again.

“Y-You want snacks huh!? Snacks are more important than me!? W-Well, I’ll prepare an extra-large cake and chocolate or marshmallows for you! I’ll also give you—”

Whilst Rizevim was talking animatedly, his left arm was suddenly sliced off—. Vali had swung his magic sword down without a shred of mercy.

“Guuaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhh!”

Rizevim cried out in pain. Because of the surprise attack, he wasn’t even able to evade the sword. Due to Vali being in Juggernaut Overdrive, his physical abilities had sharply increased. Rizevim had

also been distracted because of his ace, Lilith. That was why his left arm had been cut off. While watching Rizevim, who was bleeding profusely above his left arm, Vali still spoke with a chilling tone

“Since the moment that you got distracted, it was already over for you. Lilith was also distracted because she was in this confused state. Just like that, as soon as there was an opening, I attacked you.”

While holding the section of his arm that had been cut off, Rizevim’s face distorted with anger.

“……Fucking…! It’s because I had to maintain those emotions that it led to this!”

I see, so that bastard had to maintain a slight level of emotion with Lilith? As a result, Lilith’s emotions had also leaked out. It incurred such an outcome. Anyway, if it’s this bastard, he’d definitely mess around with a playful attitude. In the end, he was the one who tripped himself over. Vali raised the magic sword, and instantly slashed it forward.

“—Die.”

In the instant that the sword was about to make contact — Vali suddenly let go of the sword. His hateful expression also disappeared. While shaking his head, he exhaled heavily.

“……After Hyoudou Issei has pursued you so far, it’s no good at all if I kill you. Only tasting the sweetness of victory doesn’t fit my principles at all. —Also, the person who really wants to kill you is here.”

Vali then turned his gaze towards a certain place. Most likely, he had felt that presence, and so he had a new idea. —The Dragon Gate opened within this space once more. A golden aura was released from within the Dragon Gate. Seeing this, Rizevim became even more nervous, and was at a loss for words.

“……You’re kidding.”

The figure which emerged from within the Dragon Gate was — the

Dragon King with golden dragon scales. His body was still a bit weak, and it looked like the injuries that he had sustained in Heaven had yet to heal. But, he had a powerful pressure, and a clear intent to kill; the Gigantis Dragon [161] — Fafnir moved while dragging his body out.

[……I've finally found you.]

Looking at the enemy, Rizevim, standing before him, Fafnir spoke with vigour. Rizevim still looked as though he was in disbelief, as he shook his head — while at the same time trembling in fear.

"…Argh! Why…! Why would you be so persistent…!? Even in my dreams you've been biting onto me without letting go!"

Rizevim was haggard and had lost his calm reasoning because he had been constantly attacked by Fafnir in his dreams, and constantly chased. These humiliating situations had been occurring in his dreams tens, hundreds, and possibly even more than a thousand times. That's right; he had been killed in his dreams constantly, which pushed him into a corner mentally.

[…You made Asia-tan cry.]

Fafnir's ferocious eyes were glowing as he moved closer to Rizevim with each step that he took. Anger, hatred, and loathing were continuously being released from the Gigantis Dragon body—. Being stressed by the force of an overwhelming pressure, Rizevim's face turned pale. —But, because his injuries were too severe, his body fell to the floor. At this time, Fafnir shortened their distance little by little, and was eventually directly in front of him. Rizevim extended his hand out, and forced on a smile.

"…Wait! Please wait! That was…you see! It was a performance! For a super lively atmosphere! After all, for Lucifer's son to get inside Heaven—"

GOON! Together with that blunt noise, the sound of bones being crushed resounded throughout this space. Fafnir's huge claws, without any mercy and ignoring Rizevim's pleas were completely trampling over his legs.

“Gaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh! Bastard! You bastard! DAMNED DRAGON!”

While screaming out resentfully, Rizevim lifted his upper body in the midst of the pain. However, both of his legs were already being stepped on by Fafnir, and it was impossible for him to escape now. Fafnir’s face, which was dyed red with anger faced Rizevim as he said

[—How dare you bully Asia-tan. I definitely won’t forgive you! Definitely not!]

The Dragon King’s voice, expression and aura were overflowing with rage. Fafnir’s obsession already exceeded common sense, and he had finally cornered the bastard who was known as a Super Devil. I said towards Rizevim who was looking at me with imploring eyes

“Rizevim, you’ve aggravated dragons too much. —This is your retribution.”

—Poetic justice. In order to satisfy his own desires, he had incited all kinds of people from various different factions. Regardless of the number of victims, this bastard only continued for the sole purpose of his own desires. Now, everything was being returned onto his own body. The most ironic thing was that at the bitter end, not a single dragon was even interested in fighting against him.

Speaking of which, Fafnir’s treasures are—. Dazzling gold and silver treasures, as well as some of the rarest weapons in the world. And on top of that, the most important thing was a bright girl with whom he shared a bond—. As long as he had that, Fafnir would be completely satisfied. As long as he could see Asia’s smile, that would be more than enough to make him happy—. Within Fafnir’s eyes, the reflection of Asia’s bright smile was there. —But that bastard had hurt her without any hesitation. He did the same to Ise as well. Originally, that guy and his nakama were living a happy and enjoyable life. Vali was also like that…he was originally able to live a peaceful and quiet life with his parents. Rizevim you bastard, you interfered in things that were more precious than anything else; you acted against the things that were irreplaceable. Your actions inevitably led to resentment. You trampled over too many such

things. I relentlessly said to Rizevim.

“It’ll be good if you learn before you die. Child of the Great Maou. There are places in this world that absolutely cannot be touched. But you repeatedly violated these places. This is the reason for your death.”

As a result of my words, Rizevim became angry, and then spoke without remorse.

“……Hmph! What a bastard…”

Rizevim made a final struggle as he continuously released bullets of demonic energy from his hand. Fafnir’s scales were instantly hit, portions of his flesh were blown off, and he was bleeding, but he didn’t care. The Dragon King stood imposingly and dignified, this was the absolute will of a Dragon King—. Fafnir ruthlessly opened his large mouth, and it looked as though he intended to give the final blow. Upon seeing this, Rizevim’s face was filled with despair. Finally, he screamed—.

“DAAAMMNN IIITT!”

…The Gigantis Dragon’s jaws crunched down on the son of the former Maou and crushed him. As Vali watched on, it looked like a burden had been lifted from him, but at the same time his face was also filled with sorrow.

“Rizevim, you disgraced the name of Lucifer. You have polluted it too much. But you can rest assured. I shall inherit the blood of Lucifer. At the very least, I’m more suitable to be Lucifer than you were.”

That was the end of the political agitator who incited various people against us, the Super Devil Rizevim Livan Lucifer. Vali’s heart didn’t clear up until the end, but he had a look of relief on his face now. Well, whatever…. At the least, you’re definitely more suitable than that bastard to become Lucifer. After all, you’re a lot less foolish—.

## Notes

1. Kanji was Forbidden Dragon of Demonic Origin, kana was Diabolism Thousand Dragon.

2. Kanji was Primordial Darkness Dragon, kana was Eclipse Dragon.

3. A Super Devil is also known as a Transcendent Being.

4. Kanji was Silver Dragon of Great Supremacy, kana was Empireo Juggernaut Overdrive.

5. A reference to Vali defeating Pluto easily with Empireo Juggernaut Drive in volume 12.

6. Kanji was Golden Dragon King, kana was Gigantis Dragon.

# The Beast 666

After witnessing Rizevim's final moments, Vali and I — as well as Lilith (slowly following behind us), opened the two great doors to the power room, and then advanced forward. After Fafnir defeated Rizevim, he returned by going back through the Dragon Gate. This time, he should be able to have a good rest. You can recover a bit earlier, and start protecting Asia again. It's because you're trusted by her. So, as was described before, there should be a massive crystal in here — it was the crystal that was rumoured to be used in the creation of [Evil Pieces]. With that in the centre, it acted as the power generator of Agreas, thereby generating the power to drive this floating city. Just when I set foot inside — I became speechless at the sight of the power generator. The deepest part of Agreas had actually turned into an extremely large spherical cavity. The crystal which was known as the power generator in the centre was…that crystal was there along with an even larger creature next to it.

"……Tsk! T-that thing is!?"

I could only stand there as my eyes widened in surprise. …I never imagined that it would be this, that bastard Rizevim…! That thing had seven heads and ten horns, the 'beast' that was far too powerful—. Its giant body was easily longer than a few hundred metres, it was even larger than Great Red. —Apocalypse Beast Trihexa[11], 666[12]. Each one of its heads belonged to a different creature; one of them was like a lion, one was like a leopard, one was like a bear, and there was also one like that of a dragon, there was no sense of unity. Its body had a variety of features from the different creatures, and it gave off a foreign sensation from its body. Extending out from inside its body was a countless number of chains which were tightly restraining the beast. All of its heads were asleep and did not seem conscious. …It had supposedly been left at the end of the world. Rizevim had actually brought it all the way in here…. I see, the reason why he stole Agreas was because he wanted to use it as a place to hold this thing. …The problem was its immensely dark aura. That thing was actually capable of releasing aura of such a degree…! By standing here, simply being able to feel the evil aura

which was oozing out of that beast was enough to make someone go crazy. …That bastard Rizevim, he had actually already restored Trihexa to such a degree. There were only a few more seals before it would be completely released now. The Forbidden Fruit which he obtained in Heaven must have been in order to revive Trihexa, and speed up the unsealing…. And more importantly was the crystal which was embedded within the centre of Trihexa's body. It looked like he wanted to assimilate Trihexa with the power generator of Agreas…. He was also using the power generator of Agreas to unseal it. He had actually used the legacy of the previous Maou's era in such a way. He exploited what he could from his father's legacy, he truly was a good-for-nothing son, that bastard Rizevim. … Anyway, it's quite lucky that we'll be able to take some preventative measures at this stage. Regardless of what we want to do though, Rossweisse's sealing research would not be able to meet the deadline. She certainly was a genius, but this unsealing speed was far too abnormal. All of the different things that he did were all in order to accelerate its unsealing…. Vali raised his head and looked at the massive beast as he said

"So that's how it is, even I wouldn't be able to defeat it. Even if I was allowed to fight, I would be powerless against it in my present condition."

Vali carefully watched Trihexa with a tight expression on his face. Suddenly, Lilith pointed to the wall.

"Ddraig, Ddraig."

While thinking about what she was talking about, I turned my gaze to follow the direction that she was pointing at—.

"…What! He even went and did something like that…!"

I was completely astounded by the scene in front of me. Within the spherical cavity, a myriad of cocoons were hanging down from the wall. A part of it could be seen at the top of the cocoon. —Looking closely, all of them were the heads of the Boosted Gear Scale Mail[131]. That is to say, of the cocoons which were hanging from the walls of the cavity, inside all of them were artificial Boosted Gear Scale

Mails. Were they the same type as the one that Euclid Lucifuge used? Most likely, there was nothing inside them. If they were truly Boosted Gear Scale Mail which were able to move on their own… simply imagining that made me shudder. Such a number of them was extremely bad. Within this space, from top to bottom, and front to back were more than a thousand cocoons…! I shuddered again whilst looking at what Qlippoth had prepared. But, we were very lucky right now. We would be able to stop it here before it actually began. I exhaled, and then allowed myself to calm down. I then took a step forward in order to stop all of this. —At that time. The power generator suddenly began to vibrate intensely. Accompanied by a rumbling noise, the power generator began to activate. How could this be!? I didn't even do anything! Why would it activate—.

[Hiyahahahahahaha! Hyahahahahahaha!]

All of a sudden, that irritating laughter was heard again. Rizevim!? No, he just died thoroughly. So, this is—.

[If this has started, then it means that I've been killed. So by whose hand was it…was it Sirzechs-kun, or was it Vali-kun?]

…This was a voice recording? It was set to activate after his death. Rizevim continued to spell out his last words.

[Well whatever, since this has started, it's fine that it's become like this. —This reaction is based on my death and will force all of the stages to be destroyed, the final step in the resurrection of Trihexa. This will use my soul as the final energy source.]

—What!? …What did you say…? I looked back towards the power generator! In the end — each of Trihexa's heads had started to open their eyes. At the same time, the seals which had been applied to it became visible, and then began to shatter—. That bastard Rizevim, he actually used his soul as a sacrifice to forcefully accelerate the unsealing! This was not good! This…was really bad! I anxious started to create a seal on the spot — but it showed no signs of stopping Trihexa's awakening at all! One of its heads had completely opened its eyes, and then roared out!

Gooooooooooooooooooooooooooooonnn!

—It was just a roar, but it felt as though even my soul was being tightly clenched! That howl just then echoed out across not only the cavity, but also the entire city! The people above would have noticed it! After that, the second head — also began to open its eyes completely!

“Vaaali! Attack it quickly! If that thing revives — the world will end!”

“Che!”

Following my instructions, Vali instantly equipped his armour, and then flew out! He gathered a massive amount of aura and fired it towards it — but Trihexa remained unharmed! It won’t work even with Vali!? The Juggernaut Overdrive that he used before was very draining for him, but for the one known as the strongest Hakuryuukou in history to land a blow and not even be able to scratch the skin…! While lost for words, I could do nothing but continue to create several layers of seals over and over again; even a little bit would be good, I had to gamble on that tiny possibility! Vali also continued to attack it endlessly! At this point, Rizevim’s last words still continued.

[This is a forced resurrection after all, so I don’t know what will happen. Perhaps even greater damage than I expected will occur. — At the same time that Trihexa is being revived, a very interesting thing will also be released. That is…perhaps it has already appeared before your eyes, the mass-produced fake Sekiryuutei, and a large army of them too.]

The cocoons of the Sekiryuuteis which were originally hanging off the wall—. They began to break apart one by one. The Plate Mail [141] which had been adjusted to move on their own then started to climb out of the cocoons slowly.

“Lilith! I’ll give you snacks afterwards, can you do something about that right now!?”

I cried out to Lilith as a desperate hope. Lilith walked towards Trihexa, and simply raised her head to observe it—.

“Scary.”

…Perhaps it was an instinctive fear of Trihexa. Then we'll just have to change the target.

"Well, then do something about those mass-produced Sekiryuutei!"

Lilith obeyed my instructions, trotted over there, and then sent the Sekiryuutei which had just activated flying with a single punch! She was indeed Ophis' spawn! Having said that though, going by her leisurely pace, destroying that many Sekiryuutei was somewhat…!

[Because they're replicas, they don't have the strength of the real thing. But with this, it's certainly possible to destroy the city.]

The mass-produced Sekiryuutei spread their wings, and then flew towards the surface together! The third, and fourth head of Trihexa had already opened their eyes. In this desperate situation, that bastard's disgusting laughter echoed throughout the room.

[Hyahahahahahahahahahaha!]

……Rizevim…! Livan! …That bastard…! Even after your death, you won't let go of us and you'll continue your evil!?

[The legendary beast recorded in the Book of Revelation, and its subordinate fake Sekiryuutei army! Well, what will you do, how will you deal with this!?]

Vali became even more impatient upon hearing Rizevim's words, and continued to attack Trihexa, but the beast ignored him and continued to awaken. Rizevim's gleeful voice still did not stop—.

[Like this, the Underworld, Heaven and the Human World will be destroyed, carrying my will and dream, and advancing towards another world that has never been seen—]

His voice suddenly stopped. At this time, another voice resounded within the power room.

<<Your last words were still such a trifling matter…how truly hopeless, Prince Rizevim.>>

—It was Apophis' voice. Although he himself wasn't present, it was definitely the voice of the Evil Dragon Apophis who had appeared

just before. Then, the voice of another Evil Dragon was also heard.

[Gukuku, but it could be considered to be his style.]

[How bothersome!]

[That's dead right!]

It was Aži Dahāka!

"Those are the voices of Apophis and Aži Dahāka!?"

I said that as I lifted my head to look upwards. Without any sign of hesitation, Apophis answered me

<<That's correct, former governor-dono. Unlike earlier, it's a bit rude of us to be there only in voice right now. I'm very sorry about interrupting you while you were listening to the prince's last words, but please listen to my next announcement.>>

Aži Dahāka and Apophis began their declaration of war against us!

<<We will take Trihexa and the army of fake Sekiryuutei.>>

[We'll take them away.]

[We're going to use them.]

[Not only in the Underworld and the Human World, but also in another world, we're going to create the world that belongs only to Evil Dragons. So please allow us to make good use of them.]

Just while they were saying that, Trihexa's heads — the final seventh one had now opened its eyes. I wasn't sure if it was bound to be, or just coincidence that the final head was that of a dragon—.

"You guys, did you plan to use Rizevim and us from the very beginning?"

After hearing my question, Apophis replied

<<No, not from the very beginning. —It's only because Prince Rizevim was too pathetic that we planned this.>>

[The worst is that that guy looked down on dragons too much. And

I'm not just referring to the Hakuryuukou in there or Fafnir. He simply thought that Devils were the strongest race and tried to use them, he was also too fond of playing little tricks.]

[Dragons like simplicity and straightforwardness the most!]

[There's no need for thinking! One simply follows what they feel!]

In front of Vali and I — the seventh head had already woken up entirely!

Gyooooooooooohhh! Zuooooooooohhh! Gyooooooooohhh!

The seven heads were howling out individually—. The booming volume of their noise caused even the entire city to shake. I was forced to use defensive magic to protect my ears. Even after it finished howling, my ears were still aching. —Trihexa had revived.

The giant beast shook its enormous body, and forcefully snapped the chains which were binding it. At the same time, this room was beginning to collapse. No, it wasn't just this room. Even a part of the city was beginning to collapse from the shockwaves which were produced by Trihexa's revival. One of the heads looked upwards, and then opened its gigantic mouth. Within its mouth, an unimaginably vast amount of aura was gathered! —Shit! I instantly grabbed hold of Lilith, and then dashed into a corner to take refuge. I also created several layers of defensive magic barriers. In an instant—. One of Trihexa's heads spat out an immensely large fireball! The ceiling was struck by this blow, several explosions occurred, and the ceiling began to crumble. Amidst the shockwaves produced by these explosions, I continued to strengthen my defensive barriers. …Once, twice, three times, the shockwaves of the explosions shattered my magic barriers one by one. …Just a single head ejecting a fireball out of its mouth is like this…!? From the broken ceiling — rays of light poured down. Trihexa was illuminated by the light — all of its heads focused onto the light which was streaming in…it appeared to be highly satisfied. Trihexa slowly flew up towards the ceiling which had been destroyed. Then, more than a thousand of the mass-produced Sekiryuutei flew up, following it! …It was an incredible scene. Next to the beast recorded in the Revelation was a sea of red dragons, all moving together. I —

couldn't help feeling that it was the beginning of the Apocalypse as I watched this scene. And in my mind, I recalled the passage of the Apocalypse.

—I saw a beast rising out of the sea.

Moving through the ceiling of the power room, the giant beast had been released—.

—The beast had seven heads and ten horns, with ten crowns on its horns. And on each head were blasphemous names of God.

With the numbers 666 on its seven heads, it was an overly powerful beast—.

—The beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like those of a bear, and its mouth was like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast its own power, throne and great authority.

Juxtaposed with the Apocalypse Dragon[151] Great Red, it was the legendary beast recorded in the Book of Revelation—.

—One of the heads seemed to have had a mortal wound, but it had immediately healed. All of the Earth's inhabitants were frightened. They worshipped the dragon which had given the beast its authority.

From afar, I could see that Trihexa, which had flown out of the ceiling was being attacked by the [DxD] team who were outside. …Against the most evil beast, it had no effect at all—.

—Who could match up to this beast?

…If Great Red fought against it, not only the Underworld and the Human World, but the worlds of the other mythologies would also… they wouldn't be safe!

—Who could wage war against this beast?

So, who could possibly stop it…! Trihexa and the large army of red dragons had already flown out of the power room completely—.

"…Damn it."

Within the collapsing cavity, I could only bitterly continue to slam my fist against the wall. The voices of Apophis and Aži Dahāka made a final announcement.

<<Come if you want to come. —We Evil Dragons and you of [DxD] will have our final battle. Don't worry, we won't play any petty tricks like Prince Rizevim. We will eradicate everything in front of our eyes together with Trihexa.>>

[Come quickly, Vali Lucifer. Let us fight again. We can fight while admiring the destruction that Trihexa will perform. Don't you feel excited? Since this is a fight for your lives, a dragon that does not fight is not a real dragon!]

[The Heavenly Dragons against Evil Dragons!]

[Bring the Sekiryuutei as well!]

Then Vali — looked at Trihexa flying in the sky and revealed a fearless smile.

"Of course. Aži Dahāka. That is very interesting indeed. That's simple and easy to understand."

…Really. Under these circumstances, these two are even more troublesome than Rizevim to some degree…. Apophis and Aži Dahāka were different to the arrogant and presumptuous Rizevim, they were simply a gathering of pure power. I see, I finally understood now. All of the dragons who possessed power — were pure. To dreams, fighting, violence, magic, and survival—. That's why they devoted their all. They defeated every obstacle in their way, they won victoriously, and then fell and disappeared—. Ah, Rizevim. That's why it was impossible for you to win. At the very end you stumbled over yourself, and everything was taken from you. These dragons all possessed their own immense power, and lived freely according to their own will. Now, the fate of the world was dominated by dragons. It's the same as the time when the Two Heavenly Dragons interfered in the fight between the Three Factions. —Those guys were all convinced that they were the strongest. They acted and lived only according to their own thoughts. The final battle around Trihexa had begun. Regardless of whether it was our side, or

the enemy’s side, at the centre of everything were dragons—.

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**Notes**

1. Kanji was Imperial Beast of the Apocalypse, kana was Apocalypse Beast.

2. 666 is read as Trihexa.

3. Kanji was Sekiryuutei armour, kana was Boosted Gear Scale Mail.

4. Kanji was full-body armour, kana was Plate Mail.

5. Kanji was True Red Dragon God Emperor, kana was Apocalypse Dragon.

# Deterrence

—The Underworld, Fallen Angel's Territory. A series of resorts were being developed for the VIPs of various factions by the Fallen Angels, one after the other. In the corner of one such accommodation which had already opened for business, there was a single youth who was at the swimming pool. The youth was lying on a deck chair underneath the parasols which were lined up along the side of the pool. The youth's gaze was focused on the surface of the water; he was watching an image that was visible only to him. Shown within the image was an enormous beast which released a fearsome aura, as well as a countless number of red-coloured Plate Mail which were drifting around it. The youth watched the image on the surface of the water with great interest — he watched the scene which could be considered as the beginning of the Apocalypse whilst moving the pieces on the board which was placed on the table beside him.

"Chaturaji[1]—. It's said to be the origin of Chess and Shogi."

There was suddenly a voice. The youth darted his eyes over, and noticed that a bewitchingly beautiful and attractive male Devil was now standing there, without him realising. The male Devil sat down on the deck chair on the opposite side of the table, and then moved a piece on the game board which was laid upon the table — one of the pieces of Chaturaji. The male Devil said to the youth

"Shiva-sama, what a coincidence for us to meet in a place like this."

The youth who was called Shiva — no, the God of Destruction grinned.

"Should it be called coincidence, or inevitability? —It's nice to meet you for the first time, current Beelzebub Ajuka."

Shiva accepted the male Devil — Ajuka Beezebub's invitation and also began to move the pieces of Chaturaji. Ajuka continued to play as he said

"The rumours say that you've accepted the request of the Three

Factions to stop Trihexa.”

Shiva also continued the conversation while moving his pieces.

“Well, sort of. However…this is beyond my expectations. —I’m afraid that even if I faced it head on, I wouldn’t be able to defeat it. It’s impossible to seal it without triggering a battle on the level of world destruction.”

“Sealing huh. As the God of Destruction who could destroy the world, you’ll only seal it?”

In response to Ajuka’s words, Shiva shrugged.

“Indeed, it is impossible even for me to kill it. Didn’t you and Azazel understand this from the very beginning? The most that can be done is a sealing, and that would be the best possible outcome. I will certainly bring destruction to it, but mere destruction will not kill it; that legendary beast-kun is not so weak.”

The God of Destruction laughed sarcastically. Ajuka raised his eyebrows slightly.

“—In order to ‘destroy’ it, only the former Ophis in her prime or Great Red who wanders about in the Dimensional Gap could do it.”

“So, the reason that you’ve come here is?”

Shiva asked while yawning. Ajuka raised two fingers.

“There are two things. My friend — Sirzechs, please do not hinder him. In order to prevent you from causing destruction with this opportunity, please allow me to observe you until the end.”

Behind Ajuka who said that — a woman with beautiful long, pale blue hair had appeared there without him noticing. The woman had a cold atmosphere floating about her, and there was an extremely powerful dragon’s aura within her body. Shiva immediately understood that she possessed immense power and was able to shift into the form of a human. Shiva recognised her, she would be Tiamat. The strongest Dragon King. She was second to none among dragons. And in her hand, Tiamat was holding a small blue device, the same

colour as her hair — a mobile phone. The instant that Shiva saw that device, he noticed that there was something abnormal about it. Perhaps, no, it was absolutely certain that that mobile phone was related to a Longinus. …Whether it was a real or a fake, since it was prepared by a Super Devil, the first time that the God of Destruction saw it, he seemed slightly afflicted by it. What was that Longinus able to do? And what did they plan to do with that Longinus? But he understood the purpose of the Devil in front of his eyes that had come to this place. Shiva, who saw through everything, made a small smile at the corners of his lips.

“Do you want to eliminate me and Trihexa along with the entire world, Devil-kun?”

In response to Shiva’s question, Ajuka smiled and shook his head.

“No. I never said anything like that. But — if the destruction of the world becomes your objective again, that will be another matter.”

Ajuka’s words greatly piqued Shiva’s interest.

“Eh, this is some really interesting conjecture.”

Shiva concluded that Ajuka more or less came here to visit so that he could grasp what his intentions were. Ajuka didn’t mind, and continued

“After Trihexa defeats Great Red, and opens the gate to another world, what do you plan to do? Do you have an agreement with Azazel-dono in this regard? You were only a deterrent against Trihexa.”

Ah, what a good Devil. This Super Devil had already made speculations on such things. Shiva laughed as he replied

“Ahahahaha, you’re quick to notice, current Beelzebub. Each mythology also fears it, more than you or Sirzechs. But, I do not.”

Ajuka nodded as he smiled eloquently.

“Yes, probably. However, I shall watch over the fate of the world with you here, so let’s become a deterrent to that possibility.”

Ajuka said that as he moved a piece board.

“…I can’t understand what this god and Super Devil are thinking.”

The beautiful woman behind him sighed as if she was uninterested. While moving a piece during his turn, Shiva then said

“Do you plan to do the same thing that Sirzechs Lucifer did when he faced Hades? Do you really value his friendship?”

During the [Devil Uprising] which was caused by the Hero Faction and Old Maou Faction of [Khaos Brigade]; in Olympus — the God of the Realm of the Dead Hades attempted to stir up trouble and take advantage of the confusion. In order to prevent this, the one who personally went to the Realm of the Dead to stop him was Sirzechs Lucifer. Ajuka’s behaviour this time was very similar to that. —But the difference between Hades and Shiva was that the God of Destruction did not feel any resentment, envy, or dissatisfaction towards Devils. However, only a little, he thought that Ajuka’s actions were brave and preferable. If he was childish and tried to flatter him with words, then he would have scorned him. So that’s how it was; Shiva silently nodded. Now, perhaps he understood the reason why Indra — Śakra was so interested in these people. It really was quite interesting, so much so that he wanted to continue watching. After all, that guy Indra, for a new Rigveda [121] — in order to produce a collection of hymns of the world again, he even used the [Pieces] outside of the mythology that he belonged to. —I gained popularity, and that has led to his resentment? While thinking this, he felt that it would be rather fun to imagine Indra’s reaction. When he mentioned Sirzechs’ name before, he could see that Ajuka’s expression softened for a moment.

“It’s a very simple situation. —If you become an enemy of his, then you’ll naturally become an enemy of mine.”

It was a single line which really showed their deep friendship, and his expression was genuine. It was his true intention. Shiva leaned his elbow on the table and held his face up with that hand as he made a slight smile.

“Fine, very well, we’ll witness it together. —Trihexa, as well as the

fate of this world.”

Shiva leisurely said so.

The sky of the Underworld — had already started to become dull, and there was a feeling of tremendous unrest. The effect of awakening the beast which was recorded in the Book of Revelation had already started to appear in the sky of the Underworld. Soon, this miasma would be floating throughout the entire Underworld, and it would drift into the Human World, Heaven, and also the worlds of other mythologies. The game — heralded the beginning of an apocalyptic battle.

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**Notes**

1. Chaturaji: A chess-like game for four players originating from India.

2. Rigveda: An ancient Indian collection of hymns which are dedicated to the Rigvedic deities.

# Afterword

Long time no see, it's Ishibumi Ichiei. The final battle of the fourth arc has begun! Volume 20 went on sale prior to DX. The previous volume's afterword mentioned that this would be Vali's volume, but Issei became the main character, so I also turned Vali into more of a lead character. For myself, when I was planning volume 20, I thought 'Perhaps Issei would be better?' so I completely revised it. So that's how it became Issei's volume. Volume 21 will be Vali's volume. I think the final battle of the fourth arc should be led by the Two Heavenly Dragons. Another thing I have to say is, I was a bit confused as to whether this volume should have some ero scenes, but the atmosphere of the previous volume was quite tense, so none of the characters would feel like that before Ravel appeared, and in relation to that incident, Issei was unexpectedly serious; so I rejected it, this simply has to be serious, so I'm sorry. Please rely on the erotic parts of DX to make up for this before the end of the fourth arc. However, since this is the climax of the fourth arc, it will have to be serious anyway. Well, let me explain the various elements from the beginning now.

**After Issei's power up**

Issei was always troubled about whether to tell his parents about his true identity. I actually planned to hide it until the very end. But, this memorable twentieth volume is Issei's own volume, so for him, I think the most important thing is his relationship with his parents. For this reason, there was a very dramatic development this time. There

should be no event better than the power up right? But, something more painful than death is headed towards him this time. It is the price of Dragon Deification. Next volume, please read it with this in mind.

The combination technique with Rias, Asia's Balance Breaker, and Rias' armour with the combination technique

The armour is similar to that of Issei's where the entire body is equipped with a tight fitting armour — it would be correct to think of it as the same suit of armour. The feeling is the same as a certain iron O'''. Speaking of which, this is something which I thought of several years ago, and I was finally able to write about it now. The baka-uple came out together with their armour on. In this case, Rias is able to fight on the front lines to some extent. Asia's Balance Breaker; for a certain amount of time, and in certain areas, it expands an extraordinary healing field, and is an ability which can completely nullify any injuries. Rather than dispelling Rizevim's attacks, it could be said that they couldn't penetrate Asia's healing field at all. That's why it looks as though his attacks were cancelled by the barrier. Fafnir's dragon aura was also added on. It is supposed to have high defensive strength, so it became a barrier which could block attacks. The aura feels the same as wearing armour. I previous said to the editor that I wanted to write this for the two main heroines, Rias and Asia, and it's finally appeared now. The name will appear in the next volume. Even if it has just debuted, I will let her have an active performance in the final battle of the fourth arc.

**Rizevim's final moments**

I've been writing the fourth arc for a few years now. This was Rizevim's last moment. Perhaps some people were surprised that he died in this volume, but I originally planned to have him die at the beginning of the battle during the finale of the fourth arc, as some would expect. I was continually thinking about the people who would defeat him. At the earliest stage, I wanted Vali to defeat him alone. But, he is his real grandfather after all, so even if he hated him, letting Vali do it directly was really…it would actually feel difficult. Perhaps the readers also had similar ideas and believed that

Rizevim would beg for mercy at the end. And that Issei would also beat him up mercilessly. This volume, he used to power of Dragon Deification to corner him, and even shattered Rizevim's pride. Finally, there's Fafnir who chose to deal the final blow. Fafnir has had a symbolic role in the fourth arc, he is an incarnation of peace as Asia's guardian. Rizevim harmed Asia in Heaven, which angered Fafnir. Upholding the virtues of a dragon, I depicted him as a very persistent creature that protected his treasures. That's it! That's what I thought. That's why for Rizevim's death, I chose Fafnir to be the one who defeated him at the very end. Rizevim used the resurrected Evil Dragons, but at the end he was ridiculed by Apophis and Aži Dahāka, and then betrayed. In the end, he was insulted even further and then died. But, how should I say this, all of the people who hurt Asia die miserably.

**Trihexa, Apophis and Aži Dahāka**

As the final enemies of the fourth arc, the leaders of the army of Evil Dragons, Apophis and Aži Dahāka will be going to war. Unlike Rizevim, they're pure, bold and fearless dragons, facing off against [DxD] as their dignified and imposing enemy. I haven't allowed them to appear until now, as I planned to make them the final enemies of the arc, which would result in a direct clash to determine the winner. Trihexa also finally revived. It is a beast outside all specifications. It's a beast even more powerful than Jabberwocky that appeared at the end of the third arc…so, what will happen to the world in this critical situation? The Darkness of the Rating Games

This volume talked a lot about the internal things of the Rating Game. However, this is the case too often in real life as well. But our culture and values are different to Devils, so from our point of view, the impact should be quite different. This will be described in the next volume. In fact, it was also for future expansion that there was a lot of foreshadowing. …Please look forward to it.

**First person, third person**

The prologue and final chapter of this volume were both written in the third person. I'm afraid that this is the ninth time that DxD has been written like this. Originally, I also wrote my books in the third

person, while DxD was mainly written in the first person as a truak. This time, I wanted to try mixing in the third person for use in DxD. The feeling would probably be quite different, but the seriousness and urgency of dialogue in third person narration is shown much more easily.

Next are the acknowledgements. Miyama-zero-sama, editor H-sama, as well as other people, in these past few years, I'm sorry for dragging things out, I've given you a lot of inconveniences. Well, the flames of the final battle of the fourth arc have been ignited…it will be written in the same way as volumes 11 and 12 of the third arc, where the climax is very fun to write. The ending of the fourth arc will be written with this momentum. Volumes 21 is next…having said that though, to be released next is the second volume of DX. It will be bundled with a limited edition anime BD. The short story from volume 13 [The Unresurrected Phoenix]. For the readers who like Ravel, please I hope you can recover a bit here! So stay tuned for the final battle of the fourth arc!

Finally, there are a few more lines, so please allow me to say something selfishly. While I was preparing volume 20, my most beloved mother passed away. In these few lines, please allow me to honour my mother and father [1] [2] who have passed away. Father, mother, I still have a lot of work that I need to deliver to my fans, so I can't go over to your side. Although I haven't completed my duty of filial piety to you in this world, I hope I can finish it on the other side. I'm sorry. But, I am very happy to be the child of you two. Thank you so much.

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**Notes**

1. I believe that this is a reference to Marvel's Iron Man (某アイOンマンですね).

2. Ishibumi addresses his parents as tou-chan and kaa-chan.

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